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MIKE SHAYNE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

NOV., 1972
VOL. 31, NO. 6

NEW MIKE SHAYNE SHORT NOVEL

THE MAFIA PAYS A RANSOM

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Louie the Canary had sung to the fuzz for the last time. Now he was a bloodied, torn horror with a hole in his chest where his double-crossing heart had been. Could Mike Shayne find his killer—before an innocent boy met the same fate? One short, bullet-flecked hour would tell.

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THE NEW COMPLETE
MIKE SHAYNE
SHORT NOVEL

THE MAFIA PAYS A RANSOM

by BRETT HALLIDAY

Louie the Eel had squealed to the fuzz. It was his last song. Now he was dead, a bloody thing without a heart. Could Mike Shayne find his killer—and save a boy from the same fate?

POLICE CHIEF Will Gentry's sour mood was like the mushrooming cloud of an atomic bomb explosion. It already had filled the chief's office at Miami police headquarters and was spilling into the squad room when Mike Shayne threaded the desks.

Shayne knew most of the detectives, and they warned him of Gentry's mood with eye and hand movements as the redhaired shamus angled toward Gentry's open door. Gentry had been his close friend for years, and Shayne was instantly curious about why the chief had the detectives sitting on egg shells. But when he saw the

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dark scowl on Gentry's face he decided not to pry. The chief wasn't even smoking one of his evil-smelling black cigars.

Shayne always listened to his sixth sense. Prying would get curt answers and no information, but give Gentry a chance to explode privately and a friend might unload to a friend.

Shayne said, "Morning, Will. Just cruising past. Got time for a cup of coffee?"

"No."

"Okay. See you around."

Shayne turned out of the office. He had taken two strides when Gentry growled, "Hold it, Mike. I'll go out with you."

The two men walked together through the squad room. Shayne noticed that no detective looked up. Side by side, the private eye and the police chief moved along the corridor toward the street door.

Ahead of them, Dan Donovan, one of Gentry's youthful new detectives, pushed out the street door. Donovan stopped as if in sudden thought, then turned back into the building. He nodded curtly as he passed Shayne and Gentry. Shayne grunted and Gentry said nothing. Shayne pushed open the door and Gentry went ahead of him out into the bright winter Friday morning.

Len Sturgis, the hulking, immensely tall ace of Will Gentry's Homicide Bureau, turned from the walk into the building. His face lit up with recognition of Shayne. He lifted a hand in greeting.

"Morning, Chief. Morning, Mike."

The sudden sound of the shot was only a snap above the street noises but Shayne knew instinctively the sniper had used a high-powered rifle. Gentry's hat sailed. Miami's Chief of Police went down hard with a yelp. Shayne propelled himself in a flat racing dive, smacking the sidewalk. He felt skin peel back from his knees and palms and then he was rolling and cursing and reflexively pawing the shoulder holster under his coat. He yanked out the .45 and leveled it.

But there was no target as Shayne lay flat on his belly on the hot concrete. He rolled again. He expected more rifle shots, slugs spattering the street and sidewalk. He continued to roll and twist and squirm, making himself as elusive a target as a man caught in the open can be. He had lost his battered Panama. Perspiration poured into his eyes, blurring his vision.

Suddenly Shayne realized it was finished. The result of the single shot had satisfied the marksman. The abnormal silence startled him.

He pushed up on his knees and focused on the sprawled Gentry. The police chief was writhing, his legs and arms pumping. Abruptly, Gentry went flaccid.

Shayne scrambled to the fallen Gentry. The action seemed to trigger a sidewalk that had become frozen in the enormity of the moment. Excited voices, shouts, the scraping of feet came to Shayne and he saw Len Sturgis zig-zagging across the street, moving through the traffic in a sliding, sidestepping, powerful run. Sturgis had recently been made assistant chief of detectives by Will Gentry. He was one of the ablest and the largest detective on the force.

Gentry was silent now, his muscles relaxed, his mouth hanging open. His coloring was gone, and he was a pale white, except for the red slash across the side of his skull. The blood was very red and ran in unpatterned rivulets down into the crook of his neck and began to spread on the concrete. He looked dead.

Shayne saw the movement of Gentry's diaphragm. It was a weak movement but it pulsed spastically. He went up on his knees and yelled, "Ambulance!"

Detectives and uniformed policemen poured in on him, forming a circle. One of the faces told him: "Ambulance is on the way, Mike. Is he—"

"Not yet! Fan out! Get that bastard sniper! Building across the street! The roof!"

Dan Donovan crouched beside Shayne. "Some of the boys have gone over to help Sturgis. What about the Chief? Is he dead?"

"He's breathing! Can't you see?"

"Easy, Shayne. This is bad business for all of us."

Shayne shook himself and stood. Icily, he surveyed the circle that had formed. Most of these men were cops. Why weren't they running down the sniper?

Donovan stood and squared on him. "Put your gun away, Shayne," he said in a tone that was flat yet sympathetic. "Sturgis and some of the others are across the street. They've got the building surrounded."

Shayne looked at the building. It was four floors of white, modern architecture, sparkling in the sunshine, windows of the various offices gleaming, a busy building with hundreds of people scurrying in and out of it daily.

An ideal building for a sniper to move undetected in and out of. Any man, properly attired and with a break-down rifle disguised, could slide into that

building, go up to the roof, fire a shot, break down the weapon and walk out.

Or had the shot come from one of the office windows?

Shayne was torn between sticking with his friend, and going after the sniper. There had been prior occasions when he had felt like tearing a man apart, limb by limb, but the feeling never had been as strong as that racing in torrents through him now. He wanted the sniper all to himself. He wanted him in some musty, dim, very private place, dangling sure death before the man's eyes as he picked the man apart.

The ambulance arrived and Will Gentry was put into it, Shayne making sure he was properly handled. Then Shayne plunged across the street, his .45 in hand again. Sidewalk curious parted as if sliced by a sword as the redhead raced to the main entrance of the office building.

Len Sturgis reached out, caught his arm and spun him around. "Hold it, Mike!"

"Have you found him?" Shayne roared, dancing for balance.

Sturgis shook his head. His face glistened with perspiration and his eyes were like polished marble.

"Cool it, man, will you? Don't give us trouble. We've got enough."

"I want the bastard, Len!"

"This is police business, Mike! You're out!" Sturgis hesitated, then said flatly, "Put the gun away. If you don't, I'll have a couple of the boys take you away. It's your choice, man."

Reluctantly, the redhead jammed the .45 into his shoulder rig and stared hard at Len Sturgis, making no effort to disguise his feelings.

Sturgis nodded briefly. "Let's go over to where it happened and do some thinking. The building is secured. Nobody is going to come down to the street or out for the next few days without a thorough shakedown."

They returned to the spot where Gentry had fallen. Gentry's blood was on the sidewalk. Both men stood staring at the white office building, inventorying it minutely, figuring the angle of fire.

Finally Shayne growled, "Okay, Len. Did he fire from the roof or an office?"

"I went up to the roof. It looked clean, but I'm picking it."

"The bastard had to expose himself long enough to aim and shoot. Didn't anyone see him? Somebody along the street

must have. You, Len? You were coming along the sidewalk."

"I don't look at roofs when I walk, Mike. Do you?"

Shayne looked around. He saw Dan Donovan moving through the crowd toward headquarters. "Donovan!"

The youthful detective faced Shayne.

"You came out of headquarters immediately ahead of Gentry and myself. You paused just outside and then came back in. Didn't you see anything unusual? Didn't you—"

"Like what, Shayne?" Donovan said, frowning. He returned to the redhead.

"Like a sniper on a roof, damnit!"

"Cool down, Shayne. We're all as upset as you are. But, to answer your question, no, I didn't see a sniper. Frankly, I don't remember seeing anything unusual."

"Mike," soothed Len Sturgis, "Let's hoof it to the hospital."

II

THE HOSPITAL lobby was cool, dimmed and smelled of money and hygiene. Mike Shayne and Len Sturgis occupied a new couch. They had been chased downstairs by a busy nurse. Shayne's secretary, Lucy Hamilton, who had

brought Mrs. Gentry to the hospital, had been allowed to remain upstairs with the calm woman.

The police chief was in a private room now, still breathing, still unconscious, a variety of tubes feeding him life. Doctors were debating about surgery while cops positioned themselves in and around the hospital. No killer was going to get to Will Gentry to finish a job.

Shayne lit a cigarette and looked up at the sound of a minor flurry at the lobby desk. Tim Rourke, *Miami Daily News* reporter and an old and trusted friend, was making demands. Shayne saw him pointing across the lobby and the detective stood as Rourke approached on quick footsteps.

Rourke was a tall, lean man with deep-set, cynical eyes. Those eyes in his cadaverous face were troubled now.

"I caught the flash at the

office, Mike," he said on approach. "How's Will?"

"Holding on. He's in a coma. The doctors aren't saying anything."

Rourke nodded to Len Sturgis, then asked, "What in hell happened? Who gunned Will? And why?"

Shayne glanced down at the blank-faced Sturgis. "Two things are obvious. The guy knew Gentry on sight, even from a distance, and Gentry was his target. He didn't pop at me. He fired the one round, which also probably means the guy figures he's an expert."

"Un-huh," Sturgis said deep in thought and without looking up.

"So what have we got?" Shayne went on, beginning to pace. "Who wants Will dead?"

Sturgis remained silent and staring at something unseen on the polished floor.

"Maybe you can start with the nut, the psycho," Rourke put in. "Somebody warming up for the political conventions maybe?"

"No," Sturgis said flatly.

Shayne glanced at Rourke. The newspaperman shrugged, looked worried and puzzled. Shayne said, "How about recent jail and prison releases. Len? Maybe some gun with a real squeal against Gentry has just been turned loose."

"We're already working on that angle."

Shayne pressed, "Or there's got to be a few guys around town with beefs against Will. Somebody he's busted. Or maybe—" Shayne hesitated, then said, "You could have a bad cop, Len. Somebody in the department with a real—"

Sturgis looked up quickly, cutting off Shayne's words. "That's ugly thinking, Mike."

"But a possibility."

"Len," Rourke said, "something's eating at you. You're thinking hard, not listening."

"I'm thinking about Antonio Cicerone," Sturgis said flatly.

"Huh?" Shayne stopped pacing and stared at the assistant chief of detectives.

Antonio Cicerone was president of Recreation Investment Corporation, a giant, complexed, Miami-based conglomerate that developed, constructed and promoted huge recreation areas all along the Gulf coast from Florida through Texas. Antonio Cicerone also was the biggest live mobster in all of Miami and Miami Beach.

"Give," snapped Shayne.

Sturgis looked up. He was taut. "There's been some kidnappings recently, Mike. Mobsters, big boys, Cicerone friends who have popped in from out of town have been

hijacked and held for ransom. We're sure of four cases, and we hear that $100,000 was paid in each case. Maybe you've heard rumors, too."

Shayne grunted.

"Yeah," he said. "I've heard stories, but I figured that's all they were, wild stories. I asked Gentry about them a couple of weeks ago, and he shrugged them off. But they're for real, huh?"

Rourke put in, "I've heard tales, too, Len. We've been working on it at the paper, but nobody has come up with anything concrete."

Sturgis said, "Somebody is periodically hitting the mob, you can take that for fact. Of course, we don't get any formal complaints. Who expects beefs from the mafia? But we know they've been hit, we know they've paid, probably in skim money from Vegas, and we know Cicerone is upset. What we've got is a kidnap gang with respect for neither the law nor the underworld. And Gentry has been nosing."

"And come up with what?" Shayne graveled.

Sturgis shrugged. "Nothing concrete toward solution."

"So where's the tie between these snatches and Will being cut down? Don't tell me you think the sniping was Cicerone's way of telling Will to mind his own business. Cicerone is a hood, but he's intelligent, too. He's not going to draw special cop heat, not over something he and his boys eventually will take care of through their own sources."

Sturgis was shaking his head. "I'm relating, Mike, that's all: Cicerone, a kidnap gang, police interest. A moment ago you landed on me for not considering possibilities. This is a possibility."

"I'd say you might have something," Shayne said, snubbing out his cigarette in a polished ashtray, "if you relate the kidnap gang and Gentry. If Gentry had a lead on them, if he was about to land on them, if they somehow found out he was about to land, then I can see the tie. These boys would have reason to cut him down. Who the hell are they?"

"We don't have a smell, Mike. It's been driving the chief crazy. How a gang can operate right under our noses and remain so anonymous has had Gentry climbing walls."

"Mike," Rourke put in, "Cicerone could dig up a few reasons for putting Will out of the picture. If Will turned up these kidnappers, that could throw a wrench into any retaliation the mob has in mind, and I'm sure Cicerone is thinking strong along retaliation

lines. Too, publicity for the mob naturally would follow arrests and you know how hoods are about publicity these days. And there's the $400,000 to be considered. The IRS could get damned interested in—"

Shayne waved his friend down. "Still not strong enough for Cicerone to draw heat for a cop killing. You know the guy, Tim. He isn't on top because he's dumb and tough."

"The chief may have turned over a stone last night," Sturgis said.

"Like?" Shayne said sharply.

Sturgis took a moment. "It's a confidence, Mike. I'm not sure I should—"

He cut off the words. His expression was that of a man caught in indecision. Suddenly he went to a window, stared outside for a few seconds, and then returned to Shayne and Rourke.

"The chief called the four of us together late yesterday afternoon," Sturgis said, "the four of us who have been working with him on this kidnap thing. Donovan, Smith, Francisco and myself. He didn't swear us to secrecy. He threatened us with lifetime expulsion from the force, any police force, anywhere, if what he told us leaked. I don't know why he was so adamant about it, but—" Len Sturgis shrugged his hulking shoulder. "—he was."

"And?" Shayne said.

Sturgis shuffled. "I'm still not sure I should—but, hell, Mike, we've been friends for fifteen years and you and Gentry are very close."

"Will may be dying upstairs!" Shayne said bluntly.

"Okay, okay. Gentry had a meet set up last night. With Louie the Eel. The informer. You know him?"

"I know him," Shayne said curtly.

"Louie claimed to have picked up something about the kidnap gang."

"What?"

"Mike, that's what the meet was about!"

"Well," Shayne said impatiently, "did Gentry and Louie get together?"

"I don't know. You saw me come in this morning. I hadn't talked to Gentry yet."

"Where were they to powwow?"

"I don't know that, either. Gentry didn't say. All he told us was that he might have a lead. He wanted us available last night should he want to call us together after talking to Louie. If he didn't summon us, we were to meet at ten-thirty this morning in his office. That's all he told us."

"Will was in a bad frame of mind this morning," Shayne said.

Sturgis looked curious.

"He was down," Shayne went on, his mind racing. And then he said, more for himself than for the benefit of the two men who faced him, "What had him down? Something Louie told him?"

Rourke put in, "If Louie gave Will something concrete, you'd think he would be up."

"He was low," Shayne insisted.

"Maybe I'm off base, Mike," Sturgis said. "Maybe the sniping doesn't have anything to do with—"

"And maybe there was a leak," Shayne countered, his voice flat. "If Gentry and Louie got together, and if Gentry didn't talk to you boys later, Len, if warrants weren't sworn out—"

"None of us heard from him, Mike." Sturgis hesitated, his face heavy in thought. "On the other hand, Gentry and Louie could've been spotted together, I suppose. It doesn't seem likely, but—"

"Try deeper, Len," Rourke cut in. "Louie had to get his information from somebody. Maybe the guy who tipped Louie doubled up, picked up some extra green, went to Cicerone or somebody else. Or

maybe the guy panicked, maybe he—"

"Len," Shayne interrupted, "it might be interesting to know if Louie is alive this morning."

Sturgis stared at the redhead for a moment, then went to the lobby desk. He used the phone, dialed. When he returned, his face was blank. "Donovan checked the overnight tickets. Nothing on Louie, nothing on any unidentified bodies."

"Damn, if only Will would wake up," Shayne muttered.

"Donovan, Francisco and Smith are heading out to run down Louie now," Sturgis went on.

"He'll talk when I find him," Shayne vowed.

Sturgis looked mildly sur-

prised. "You're going looking for him?"

"Why not?"

"Mind if I remind you again? This is police business."

"Get off that, Len. You're not talking to some John A. Citizen."

"I'm not talking to God Almighty, either."

Shayne bristled. Sturgis squared. Rourke started to say something, then clamped his lips. Because Lucy Hamilton was approaching.

Shayne caught her in the corner of his eye and immediately forgot Sturgis. He met her halfway across the lobby. Most days Lucy Hamilton was attractive and peppy. Today she was attractive and worried, her brown curls bobbing. Shayne took her hands. "What gives upstairs, angel?"

She shook her head. "Nothing new, Michael. Will still is in the coma, the doctors still are debating about surgery. Mrs. Gentry is doing okay. Lordy, she's a strong woman."

Shayne scowled over his secretary's report before he said grimly, "Angel, you stick here, okay? I'm going hunting."

"I'd like to tag along, Mike," Rourke said.

"Hold it, you two," Sturgis cut in. His jaws suddenly were tight, his face muscles danced. "We've got a big, efficient police force. We'll find Louie. And we don't need any assistance."

Lucy Hamilton interrupted, "What's happening here? Who is Louie? And why are you angry with each other? If Will Gentry could hear you he'd bang your heads together. I assume this Louie person has something to do with why Will is upstairs this very instant. Well, if he does, go find him, the both of you. You each have your method. Go your own ways, but find this man. And stop fighting like children!"

III

IN THE parking lot outside the hospital, Mike Shayne and Len Sturgis shook hands. Neither said a word, and then the redhead graveled, "I'll be in touch, Len."

"Yeah," Sturgis nodded. "Call in occasionally. We could pick up Louie anytime."

Sturgis looked chastised as he turned and walked to the unmarked police sedan. Shayne, had he been in a different mood, would have been grinning inside at his secretary. Lucy was his tonic. She soothed in time of stress, she lifted in time of deflation, and she put together pieces when the pieces were flying apart as if exploded.

Lucy never lost sight of a whole picture.

Shayne turned to Tim Rourke. "We traveling together, Tim, or splitting?"

"Let's split," said Rourke. "I've got a place or two to dig and you've got yours." He glanced at his wrist watch. "It's almost eleven. How about if we meet at the Seafarer at two-thirty, have a sandwich and drink, put together what we have by then? We could check Len and see what the cops have."

Shayne nodded and moved off toward his battered Buick. It was at the far end of the parking lot. He covered the distance on long strides. His keen gray eyes beneath pugnacious red eyebrows were hard. He was a man of savage purpose now. The seamy side of the city was in for some roughhouse.

He dropped into the car and kicked the smooth motor alive. Then he sensed movement behind him. A moment later, a black sedan blocked his backing pattern. His right hand went inside his coat to the .45 as he rolled from the convertible, but before he drew the gun he recognized the sedan driver: Peter Painter, chief of detectives over in Miami Beach.

Shayne muttered an oath and straightened. He did not like Painter, and Painter did not like him. Neither man ever bothered to trace the source of dislike; each merely accepted. But there were occasions when their paths blended, when they were forced to tolerate one another long enough to reach a common goal.

Shayne leaned hands on Painter's sedan and stared hard as Painter rolled down a window and allowed the conditioned air to escape.

"Yeah?" said the redhead.

Painter was a slender, small-boned man, immaculately groomed. He wore a threadlike black mustache and his eyes always seemed to be dark glittering slits. Shayne saw the mustache as a black line someone had stroked on Painter with a fine brush during some moment of sadistic delight and he thought the eyes would have been better placed in the head of a snake.

Painter said, clipping the words, "We got the news on the Beach a couple of hours ago. I've been to downtown headquarters, was told to come here. How's Gentry?"

"Holding on. No more," Shayne grunted.

"Has he been able to tell you anything?"

"No."

"And no line on the sniper?"

"No."

Painter's dark eyes became speculative. "I understand you were with Gentry when he—"

"Yeah."

"Are you sure the shot was for him?"

"Nobody sprayed the street, Painter."

"That isn't exactly what I mean, Shayne. Gentry has enemies, yeah. Any cop does. But private eyes, guys who run around interfering in police business as if they are a one-man army—"

Shayne left the sedan. "See you around, Painter. Go on back to the Beach, stay out of the sun."

"Shayne!"

The redhead whirled, looked angrily on the detective chief.

"We're going to be digging over there, too," Painter warned. "And if we come up with a sniper, I hope I don't find a connection between you and—"

"Get out of my way, before I run over that comfort wagon."

Shayne muttered oaths as he piloted the car along the Miami streets. The day had become semitropically hot and humid and he perspired. But much of the heat, he knew, came from inside his skull. Painter, like no other man he knew, had the knack for getting under his skin.

But suppose Painter had been right? Could the sniper have zeroed on the wrong target?

Shayne kicked the thought around for a few seconds and then shook his head. No. One-shot snipers knew their targets. And there had been no chance for error in weighing one man's physical stature against that of the other. He and Gentry bore no resemblance.

Shayne scoured the shank of Miami, rolling from cluttered corners to wasteland alleys, sometimes on foot, sometimes piloting his car slowly. He knocked on many doors, kicked two open. His nostrils became so clogged with the smell of stale humanity that after awhile smells lost their distinctions.

He knew that silent warning bells had clanged all over this end of the city. Word had spread like a wild prairie fire: a top cop had been shot down, a tough private detective was on the prowl.

The redhead drew a solid line of blanks. It was as if a giant zipper had been drawn closed. No one knew anything about the whereabouts of Louie the Eel, who had not earned his moniker because his father had found him at sea.

Tim Rourke was nursing a Scotch when Mike Shayne walked in to the Seafarer

Restaurant at two-thirty that hot Friday afternoon. George, the owner, was an old friend of Shayne's. He had a long Greek family name which Shayne had never been able to remember or pronounce. He was small, plump, dark, completely bald. He greeted the redhead warmly and brought him to Tim Rourke at the bar.

Salty, the bartender, flipped fingers at the redhead from the bar and brought the cognac and ice water.

"How's Will?" George asked, round eyes in a round face mirroring sincere apprehension.

"Last I knew holding his own," Shayne said.

"I hope you find the rotten sonofabitch, Mike."

"I will, George."

George departed and Rourke said, "My tail's dragging, and for nothing."

"The city's scared, Tim. Everybody's crawled under a stone."

Rourke sipped Scotch, then said, "Louie has to be somewhere, Mike. Maybe the police have picked him up. They're pretty good when they dig in their toes."

Shayne polished off the cognac and phoned headquarters. Sturgis was out. The redhead talked to young Donovan. The cops still were looking for Louie. And Sturgis had left a message for Shayne. The jail and prison reports were complete: recent releases had not included any punk who might be harboring a special squeal against Will Gentry.

"What about across the street?" Shayne wanted to know.

"Nothing," said Donovan. "The building remains secured. We're going office to office, but so far nothing."

"An angle, Donovan: check out the leases. You might come up with a Cicerone satellite with offices in that building."

"It's been done, Shayne. Nothing."

Shayne phoned the hospital and finally got Lucy Hamilton on the line.

"A preliminary report has been made, Michael," she said, "but it all boils down to nothing. Will still is in the coma, and surgery is still contemplated, but the doctors have decided to wait awhile. As I get it, Will remains borderline.

He could live or he could die. No one is making any predictions."

"You'd think those dudes would know something by now."

"Only that Will may wake up anytime, or that he may remain in the coma for several days. Shall I remain here?"

"You sound bushed, angel."

"I'm not that bushed."

"All right. Then go home. But stay awake and near the phone. Tim and I are still looking for Louie, but Tim has his corners, I have mine. Beginning at six-thirty this evening Tim will call you every hour on the half hour. Beginning at seven I'll phone you on the hour. You're going to be our sole contact, angel."

"Right."

Shayne explained his plan to Rourke. They each had a fish sandwich and another drink, then fanned out again. Shayne found the slogging even heavier than during the daylight hours. The ferrets were under cover, remained there. Angry but mildly hopeful that Rourke might have turned over the right rock somewhere. Shayne made his ten o'clock call to Lucy. Rourke was batting zero, too.

"The next time Tim calls, angel, tell him to pull in his horns for tonight," Shayne said. "You get some shuteye too. I'll check the hospital later."

"I just checked, Michael. There's no change in Will's condition."

"Okay," the private detective said, fighting the sense of futility that was building in him. "I'm going to prowl for another hour or so, then call it a night."

The instant he put the phone together he sensed that he was being watched. He was in a public phone booth on a deserted corner in a festered neighborhood, an area of the city that coddled poverty and desperation, an area where a man could lose his eyes over the want of a five dollar bill. The phone booth light bathed him. He felt as if he were center stage in a large theater, a spotlight displaying him to a hostile audience.

He yanked open the booth door, dousing the spotlight and stepped outside to the darkness of the street. He slid around to a side of the booth, his hand near the .45 in his shoulder holster. He shuffled around, kept moving while his sight became adjusted to the sudden change from brightness to black. A moving target wasn't immune, but it forced an attacker to think and adjust.

The darkness gradually lost its depth, remained dense only

here and there. But the density was shapeless lumps, blobs, untouched by the pale light from the street lamp. Most of the density remained in the area of the sidewalk that joined the buildings and Shayne knew that was the area where the danger lurked. Someone was back there, measuring him for the pounce. He could feel greedy eyes on him.

He might get lucky, draw a drunk, a large, lurching shape, mouthing thick, wet noises. A drunk was no problem. A single twist of the wrist, a single chop, and the drunk could be forgotten. But a drunk would have moved by now. Drunks were impatient.

So he expected a quiet attack, one of the blobs suddenly taking on human form and sliding in like an arrow, silently, swiftly. The blob might be carrying a battered sap, a chain, or a short length of pipe wrapped in tape, possibly a knife. Silence, swiftness, the mugging finished quickly were trademarks.

Slight movement to his left alerted Shayne, but he did not turn his head. He watched from the corners of his eye. He wanted the attacker to find confidence quickly, move in under the impression he had not been seen. That would leave the attacker open. Defense would be a secondary thought.

The moving shadow took on the shape of a girl and surprised the redhead. He turned his head and stared as the girl moved slowly into the dim light of the street lamp. He relaxed suddenly, his hand dropping from the .45. The girl was emaciated looking. She probably was twenty-five, but she could pass for forty.

"I'm Mary Brown. All I want, shamus," she said, "is a light."

A cigarette dangled from her lips.

IV

SHAYNE flashed the lighter for Mary Brown. She was a hooker. An unhappy hooker. Mary Brown's dreams of riches had lost out to a greedy pimp in her early days, a carnivorous profession, and now she faced an insurmountable foe, sexual freedom among the masses.

She pulled savoringly on the cigarette. "I gotta suck it all out of this one, shamus. It's my last butt."

Shayne found the crumpled package of cigarettes in his coat pocket and stuffed it down the front of Mary Brown's dress. "There may be four or five in the pack, doll."

"Thanks. I hear you're lookin' for Louie the Eel. I hear

you've been prowlin' all day. What makes Louie so popular?"

"Popular?" Shayne said sharply.

"I should be so popular," Mary said. "I'd be rich instead of—" She cut off the words, shrugged, drew on the cigarette. "An hour ago, shamus," she said, "maybe not quite an hour, another guy was lookin' for Louie."

"And?"

"And? I dunno, I'm just tellin' yuh another guy was lookin'."

"Fuzz?"

"Naw."

"Punk?"

"Polite," said Mary. "Long-hair. Young. Clean. Some polish. But he's somebody's boy. A dirty man. He's heavy, like you're heavy, shamus. He's packin' heat."

"And he was looking for Louie, huh."

"He asked about Louie first, yeah. Wanted to know where Louie might be hangin' his pants these days."

"What did he ask about next, Mary?"

"Tucker's."

"Which is?"

"Once Cholly Tucker was the best damn boat repairman in all the Gold Coast, I hear."

"And today?"

"Buried. Too many cigarettes." She drew on the cigarette in her fingers, laughed softly, then continued, "Cholly had a place on 142nd, kind of a warehouse type place. It's where he repaired the boats. The building is still there. I guess maybe that's the place this guy was askin' about."

"Did you point him?"

Mary Brown shrugged. "I thought he'd give me a fiver."

"But he didn't."

"He said, 'Thanks.' "

"Louie and Tucker's. Is there a connection?"

"Not that I know anything about."

Shayne believed Mary Brown.

"But," she added, "it might be a good place to pull a lid over your head if you're of a mind. Who prowls empty warehouses? Kids. And you always can chase kids."

Shayne put a twenty dollar bill on top of the crushed cigarette pack.

"Know what, shamus?" Mary Brown grinned. "I'll take the older generation any day. They appreciate."

Shayne found 142nd Street and cruised the heavy shadows slowly. The street was what he'd expected: dark, littered, empty, and flanked by two strings of warehouselike structures. He muttered curses as he strained his eyes to pick up a delapidated sign, a painted

name, anything that would tell him when he had found Tucker's.

He eased the car along, using his high lights. He didn't have to worry about traffic. There was none. And only an occasional car braked at the curbing, most of them looking like abandoned heaps.

The sudden shine in his headlights alerted him. He scowled on the rear of a glistening dark station wagon braked on the right hand side of the street.

He eased past the wagon, eyeing it as if it might explode in his face. It looked empty. He rolled on down the street a half block, braked, killed his motor, punched off the headlights and twisted in the seat to stare back at the wagon. It was as out of place as a new gun in a garbage heap. Was the driver of the wagon a young dude who had been pointed by Mary Brown?

Shayne took a flash from the glove compartment, vacated the car and went up on the sidewalk. He moved into the building shadows and paused. His eyes had adjusted quickly to the darkness and he was able to pick out the lumps here and there ahead of him. None of the lumps moved. No foreign sounds came to him.

He looked over his shoulder. There was blackness, but it looked quiet. He moved out on long strides, sticking to the shadows. The night was warm and muggy. Perspiration formed a film on his skin. Something about the night made him think of murder. He attempted to put down the thought, found that he could not.

And then Shayne saw a shadow move up ahead.

He faded into a doorway, became frozen, and stared hard. The shadow seemed to have shot from one of the buildings. It was difficult to tell. The shadow moved across the sidewalk quickly, became a man moving fast. The man went around the front of the station wagon. Shayne saw an interior light in the wagon blink on and

off. His eyes were squeezed down but the wagon was too far away and the blink of the light too quick. He had been unable to inventory the driver.

The wagon motor came alive, headlights bathed the street suddenly, and the wagon moved toward the detective. He pressed back into the doorway. The wagon rolled past, abruptly slowed as the driver lifted a foot from the accelerator, and Shayne knew the driver was eyeing his car with the same curiosity he had experienced earlier.

The wagon moved slow enough for the driver to memorize a license number and then suddenly was accelerated. Twin taillights disappeared.

Shayne went along the sidewalk at a lope. At the building he wanted he played the light of the flash across its front. The light picked up the faded painted name over a door: TUCKER'S.

Shayne tried the door. Surprisingly, it opened into the black interior of the building. He stepped inside, doused the light, closed the door, and quickly moved off to his right. He stood sweating in silence and bleackness, the odor of must filling his nostrils and a feeling of vast emptiness enveloping him. His ears were tuned.

But there were only faint rustling sounds off at various angles. Probably rats. He stared hard. The darkness was too thick. He was unable to sift out objects.

After a long time he risked flicking on the flash and playing the light. It stabbed deep and brightly. But all he saw was empty space. He moved forward, taking long, slow steps, keeping the light on the prowl as he dug out the .45. The odor of decay began to clog his nose.

The building was a half block deep and had been stripped. The stripping bothered Shayne. He thought he should find at least one forgotten trash barrel somewhere. But all he got was empty space, a sense of unventilated vastness.

And then the stench began to seep into his nostrils and he stopped in his tracks. He sniffed hard. He felt like he was a hunting dog. He played the light into a corner and saw the small, walled cubicle. The light picked up two half-glassed walls, the glass coated with dust, and a corner door. The door looked closed tight.

He moved toward the cubicle, guessing that it once might have been an office, or a reasonable facsimile of an office. The stench became stronger. It was a revolting

smell and yet it drew him because he recognized it.

He stood at the door. It was open a crack. He used the muzzle of the .45 to push the door wide. And then he played the light around the clutter of the room. Discarded beer and food cans littered the concrete floor. Burnt match sticks and crushed cigarette butts were everywhere. The light hovered on a wine bottle. A stub of a candle poked up from the neck of the bottle.

Shayne moved the beam of light slightly to his right and involuntarily grunted. He had found Louie the Eel. Louie was sprawled on his back on what probably had been an air mattress. He was naked to the waist and contorted in a crusty lake of dried blood.

Someone had hacked a hole in his chest and cut out his heart. The heart was nowhere in sight.

V

OUTSIDE the building, Mike Shayne stood in the heavy shadows of the sidewalk and drew several deep breaths of wet night air. He inventoried the street, right and left. It remained quiet, litter dancing and skidding along in the soft breeze. He was a hardened man but his stomach felt knotted as he debated calling the cops. He didn't want to get tied up in an investigation, and he could be if he called headquarters and then waited for the detectives to arrive.

He went to his car and eased away from 142nd Street, driving slowly as he became immersed in possibilities. He wondered about the guy who had found Louie just ahead of him. For an instant, he envisioned the guy walking away from Louie with Louie's heart in his coat pocket.

But that could not have been. Louie had been dead for some time, probably since the previous night. Who was the guy—and who had killed Louie? More important, why had Louie been killed?

Louie dead and Gentry near death. There was a tie. There had to be.

Shayne slapped the steering wheel with a hard palm. Obviously, the meet between Louie and Gentry had not been kept secret. Somebody was on top of things, moving swiftly. Who? Cicerone and his boys? Or the kidnap gang?

Well, he had one lead.

He spotted a public phone booth and pulled into the curbing. He telephoned police headquarters and anonymously tipped the cops about the dead Louie. Then he phoned the

hospital and finally got to talk to Mrs. Gentry. Her husband still was holding on.

Shayne pointed his car across Miami toward the high rises. It was near midnight but time of night or day meant nothing to him now. He was rousting. And Antonio Cicerone could be rousted like anyone else. Cicerone was a mobster twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even though he preferred to be known as chairman of the board of directors and president of Recreation Investment Corporation.

And when a top cop was shot a top mobster knew about it almost instantly. Even before radio and TV flashes. The mob network was that intricate. The top mobster might also know why the top cop had been shot.

Shayne picked up speed. He felt as if he was rolling. He liked to deal at the top.

The gleaming structure where Antonio Cicerone holed up in a penthouse on the top floor was steel and glass testimony of modern architecture. It stretched tall into the night, ten floors higher than any of the other high rises in the area.

Recreation Investment Corporation had constructed that structure in this lush district of Miami and, from the beginning Antonio Cicerone had known he was to occupy the penthouse at the top. Antonio Cicerone always liked to look down on people and things. It was a part of Cicerone's security.

Shayne had heard enough about the high rise and Cicerone to know that a bold, frontal invasion was his best route. There were side and back entrances and exits in the building, of course, but at each there also was a man hovering nearby.

The redhead went through the front door and straight across the small, richly-appointed lobby. Two immaculate, athletically-constructed young men in deep chairs on opposite sides of the lobby stirred, but neither left his chair.

Shayne entered a self-service elevator and was quietly whisked to the top floor. He heard nothing, saw nothing, and yet he knew that his rise was being monitored by a secreted television camera. He knew that somewhere in the bowels of the building he was under minute scrutiny.

The elevator stopped and the doors parted silently in front of the redhead. He stepped from the elevator into the plushness of a large foyer and was immediately accosted by two large young men whose faces

mirrored polite pleasantness but whose eyes were brittle with awareness. Neither man made a threatening move or touched him, but he was stopped.

"I came up here to see Cicerone," Shayne said bluntly. "Not you lovelies."

One of the young men shook his head. "I'm sorry, sir. This is not a proper hour, of course, and you do need an appointment."

"Knock off that crap," said Shayne, moving forward.

The young man stepped into him, didn't touch him, but stopped him again.

"He's heavy, Fred," the other young man said from off to Shayne's right. "Under his arm."

"I see it," the man in front of Shayne nodded. His eyes were cold now, his jaw set.

"His name is Mike Shayne," the guy who stood aside said. "He's a private eye."

Shayne slid a glance at the young man. He didn't know him.

"Best you fade, Shayne," the young man said. "You've gone as far as you're going. We'll inform Mr. Cicerone in the morning that you called on him."

Shayne seethed. "Tell him I want to see him about a guy who lost his heart, pal—and tell him now!" he snapped.

Each young man shook his head.

"Good night, Mr. Shayne," the one in front of the detective said.

Shayne figured he had a chance. He could jump the heavy in front of him, spill him into the other dude, and use those seconds to leap through the door behind them. There would be no gunshots. Cicerone's reputation for not allowing guns in his vicinity was known. But these two goons had to be experts in physical defense, too. Probably karate. And how many other boys were around, hovering behind doors, waiting for the signal to pounce?

The elevator doors behind Shayne whisked open again. One of the goons from the lobby stood in the elevator, holding the doors wide with his hands. A slight smile curved his mouth. "Going down, Mr. Shayne?"

Odds were odds. Shayne snarled and returned to the elevator.

He slept hard and was awake early on the bright Saturday morning. He phoned the hospital immediately. Gentry's condition was unchanged. He remained in the coma.

Shayne put the phone together and then looked for Antonio Cicerone's number in

the book and got what he expected. No number was listed. But he found Recreation Investment Corporation listed and dialed. No answer. It was a Saturday.

He ate two slices of toast and drank three cups of black coffee while he toileted and dressed. His phone jangled as he was crossing the room to leave the apartment. Tim Rourke was on the line. He was excited. He was at the newspaper office and they'd just got the word on the death of Louie the Eel, and immediately called the redhead.

Shayne grunted. "Yeah, I know, Tim. I found him."

"Figures," Rourke said after a second's pause. "The cops are saying their tip was anonymous. Well, that pretty well ties Louie and Will, doesn't it?"

"I'm figuring it that way, yeah."

"And now?"

"I'm trying to get in to see Cicerone. He has to know something about who's been hitting them. Cicerone and his people aren't just sitting on their hands. They have to be mad."

"Maybe it's that New York thing spilling over down here, Mike. The fight between the families. Maybe—"

"The thought crossed my mind last night, Tim." Shayne admitted. "On the other hand, nobody's heard anything about any retaliation. And you can be damn sure that if Cicerone had a smell some people would be paying."

"Un-huh," Rourke agreed. "Well, I'll be in the office all morning."

"Hold it," Shayne said quickly. "Have you talked to Sturgis?"

"I did. Just before I called you."

"How's he playing Louie's death?"

"Low key. He specifically asked that we not tie it to the sniping. He said he'd sue if we did. And I suppose he might have grounds since we can't be sure Louie and Gentry even met. Hell, maybe they didn't, Mike. We don't know that they did. We've been doing a helluva lot of assuming. Of course, if Will should wake up today and say—"

"Yeah," Shayne cut him off. "Okay, I'll be in touch, Tim. You saved me a trip to headquarters."

The Miami morning was brilliant with sunshine coming from a clear blue sky, promising another warm winter day. Palm trees rustled in a gentle breeze. Shayne moved on long, determined strides from the building to his car in its apartment complex parking slot. The morning was designed for

relaxation: fishing, swimming, yachting.

If you weren't a private detective out looking for a guy who had shot down your friend. . .

Shayne got into his car and switched on the key ignition. The roar of the explosion was deafening and the shock wave pinned him against the back of the seat. He had a brief, clear impression of a motor flying apart, and then there was darkness, the billiant day suddenly wiped out.

VI

MIKE SHAYNE clawed his way up out of the pit of blackness. There was no pain, only the infuriating sensation that no matter how viciously he dug in with his toes and clawed hands the light above him kept moving out of range. Then he abruptly was bathed in brilliance. The pit had disappeared as if by magic.

He grunted and sat up. He found himself sitting on hot macadam and he was ringed by faces. The faces were curious, horror-stricken and caught in disbelief. All in one package. No one said anything. He looked around. The expression did not change but there was a slight shifting of the circle away from him, as if he were a monster coming up out of the macadam of the parking lot.

Suddenly the circle parted and a uniformed cop was kneeling before him, pushing a billed cap to the back of his head. "Mike?"

He knew the patrolman. "Some sonofabitch bombed me, Bradly," he said simply.

"You okay?"

Shayne moved arms and legs, testing. And then he stood and shook himself down. The circle of curious moved back in unison. He looked down at

himself. He was rumpled, but seemed to be no worse than if he had been in a brawl.

He stepped into the crowd, aware of the sirens that were lifting in the distance. The crowd parted as if cut with scissors. The front end of the Buick was down on its nose, wheels gone. From the driver's seat back, it looked intact, but the hood was split and he saw tiny pieces of metal everywhere.

It was as if the sky mysteriously had snowed metal. Smoke still came up from what once had been plenty of horsepower.

Sturgis and Donovan arrived with a couple of other detectives Shayne didn't know. They went up to Shayne's apartment but he could not provide any answers for their questions. All he could do was speculate.

"One thing," he said, "the guy was no expert or I'd be dead. All he managed was to blow the front end out of my car. Two, I'm not working on a case, so it either was some bastard with a grudge from some other case or it's tied to Louie and Gentry. I'm buying the latter."

Sturgis pressed, "Who tried to hit you? And why?" He paused and then said suspiciously, "Or maybe you've turned up something that we don't know about."

"I've turned up nothing, Len. Only what was left of Louie after someone else got to him."

"So it was you who called in the tip."

"Yeah."

"I'd have appreciated a call at home."

"Right then I didn't figure I could get tied up."

"How come?"

"Because I was going to see a guy."

"Who?"

"Cicerone."

"And did you?"

"Yeah, but I got stopped at the front door."

"How come you wanted to see Cicerone?"

"The kidnappings are the link, Len. And it's Cicerone people, friends who have been heisted. It's Cicerone who has been paying off. The mob has its ways. They must have something by now, a smell. Nobody keeps hitting them *bing, bing,* without the odds eventually changing in the mob's favor."

"So maybe Cicerone sent someone around to see you this morning," Sturgis said. "Maybe Cicerone doesn't want you or anyone else prying into his little operations."

"If Cicerone sent a bomb,

Len, I wouldn't be standing here this minute."

"All right, damnit, then who—"

"The kidnap gang," Shayne cut in, beginning to pace the thick carpeting of his front room. "I've got them jumpy. Why, I don't know. Unless it's because I've involved myself. It could be, Len, it could be that the gang has been operating with inside information from headquarters or from inside Cicerone's empire. Maybe from both sources. That might answer some questions. They'd know who was coming to town, when to hit. They'd also be able to keep tabs on cop probing.

"Point is, Len: there are no 'ins' with me. I'm a loner, a private eye. Nobody knows what I'm thinking, where I might hit next. So by the mere fact that I've involved myself I'm scaring people. Figures?"

"Maybe."

"So get out of here," Shayne said abruptly. "I'm healthy, and I still have more scaring to do."

"Such as?" Sturgis said sharply.

"Cicerone. If you want to tag along, come ahead, but the two of us won't get across the lobby. I might make it this morning. Antonio will have heard about the bombing by the time I get there, and he might be curious."

Sturgis stood. It was obvious he didn't like the decision that was forced on him, but he said, "You'll be in touch with the department later?"

"Yeah."

Shayne and the four detectives walked out of the building. No one said anything. Outside, two of the detectives moved off toward the demolished car. Sturgis hung back and Donovan stuck with him until Sturgis said, "See how the bomb boys are doing, Dan. Let's get this mess cleaned up as quickly as possible."

Donovan moved off. Sturgis waited a few seconds, frowning, then said, "A couple of things are bothering hell out of me, Mike. One, why cut out Louie's heart?"

Shayne scowled. "I don't know, Len."

"It's ghoulish."

"Amen."

"And the other: you keep making noises about somebody down at headquarters being involved with this kidnap gang."

"All I'm saying is you boys keep tabs on movements in and out of town. Police departments cooperate, right? A heavy comes down from New York and New York knows about it. New York tips. Or some goon slides into town and maybe you haven't heard from

New York, so you tell them one of their boys is on the scene.

"In other words, you've got paper around headquarters about some of these characters. And maybe you've also got a cop with a sharp eye and an open hand, somebody who's tipping the kidnap gang when a ripe-looking mark is in town. For a price, natch."

"That kind of tip could come from inside Cicerone's house, too," the tall detective said.

"Granted." Shayne nodded. "Which is one of the things I want to hit him with."

"Un-huh. Well, be careful up there, Mike. The Atlantic is a deep sea."

Shayne pounded out of the parking lot to the sidewalk. He looked for a cab. Nothing in sight. He moved on down to a corner, looked up a sidestreet. A glistening black Lincoln Continental slid up in front of him and was braked. A back door of the Continental opened and Shayne felt cool air pour out.

"Inside, Mr. Shayne," said a cold voice from the interior. "Mr. Cicerone wants you."

Shayne ducked and looked inside the back seat. A neat looking man with narrow features that were like marble waited for him. He didn't know the man. Up front, the Continental's uniformed chauffeur stared straight down the street, unmoving.

"Inside," the passenger snapped.

Shayne stiffened. He put hands on top of the car and peered through the open door, inventorying. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, but Cicerone's delivery boy was slightly out of character. Cicerone people were polite, always polite. They called it creating a good public image. So maybe this guy hadn't come from Cicerone. Maybe using Cicerone's name was a ruse.

And then the dude broke another Cicerone House Rule: no violence in public unless absolutely necessary.

He took a gun from a holster under his coat and pointed the muzzle at Shayne's forehead. "You have five seconds to decide," he said in a voice that cracked with harshness. "You get a hole in the head or you take a ride."

"You know damned well you're not going to shoot here," Shayne said. "But I want to see your boss, anyhow."

Shayne got into the back seat of the Continental and closed the door. The car moved out quietly. The dude put the gun out of sight, said nothing, stared straight ahead at the back of the chauffeur's head.

"You got a name, pal?" Shayne ventured.

"Shut up," the man said.

The driver surprised the detective. He drove straight to the magnificent structure that housed the Cicerone penthouse. He braked the Continental before the main entrance.

A young guy came across the sidewalk briskly and yanked open the car door, waited for Shayne to leave the car. He was somber, his eyes brittle. Tiny muscles flicked in his cheeks. Shayne was escorted by the two men into the lobby of the building. He inventoried swiftly.

The lobby seemed unusually cluttered. Six young goons were in sight, and pretense was gone. They stared hard at the redhead as he was ushered toward the elevator. They were taut, angry. The anger was in their stares.

Shayne entered the elevator with his two escorts. He turned around. The doors whispered shut, and then he was slammed back against the wall and the .45 was yanked from his shoulder rig without a word being spoken.

"Hey!" he rasped. "How come the rough stuff? What the hell's happened? You guys getting scared?"

He did not get an answer.

On the penthouse floor, he was propelled from the elevator into the lush foyer. It was empty, but across the foyer the door to Cicerone's living quarters stood open. Shayne was moved through the door. He faced Antonio Cicerone, who sat with his knees crossed in a wing chair across the room and near a window.

Shayne tightened inside. Cicerone looked ill. He was pale, his cheeks were hollowed slightly, his mouth was a tiny, sharp line, lips drawn almost in a grimace. The only fiery thing about him was his dark eyes. They looked filled with black poison.

Cicerone flipped fingers and Shayne's two escorts slid silently out of the room. One of them closed the door.

Cicerone said, "Sit down, Shayne." His voice was edged with ice.

He was a medium-statured man, neat in gray slacks, deep blue sport coat and a white silk shirt that was open at his throat. Shayne knew he was in his late sixties, but he looked a

trim fifty. There was no bulging stomach, no pouches around or under the black eyes, no extra skin wrinkling his neck. His fingernails were manicured and there was no hint of arthritic swelling around his joints.

Shayne took a stab: "We've never met formally, Cicerone."

"Nor are we going to now," he replied, the voice remaining frosty and the dark eyes boring into the detective as if he were trying to see inside the redhead. "What happened to you this morning?"

"My car blew up in my face."

Cicerone didn't seem surprised that the detective was still alive. He merely gave a slight nod, and then he asked, "Who attempted to kill you and why?"

"If I knew I wouldn't be here. This may strain your credulity a bit, Cicerone, but earlier I happened to be on my way up here to see you. Then bang. I was hit. You know I was here last night, of course."

"That's why you're here right now, Shayne," he said. "You made a crack about someone losing his heart."

"So I did."

"You were alluding to Louie the Eel."

"Was I?"

"No fencing, Shayne. The cute stuff is out. I don't have the time. One of my people found Louie just ahead of you. He took a license number from a Buick convertible as he was driving away. The number has been checked. The car is registered in your name. What made Louie so damned important to you?"

For the first time since he had been picked up Shayne felt as if he might own an ace. Until this instant, it had been a one-way game. Cicerone had been dealing, and Cicerone had been in control. But suddenly he needed to know something.

Shayne grabbed the opening. "Why were you interested in Louie?" he countered. "Because of a meet he might have had with a top cop who later was shot down?"

Cicerone said nothing. He seemed to be debating.

Shayne prodded, "You said you didn't have time for fencing, pal."

"Okay," Cicerone snapped. "Because."

"Your line at police headquarters tipped you. Will Gentry and Louie had a meet."

"About something I'm interested in," Cicerone nodded.

"Recent kidnappings, payoffs of a $100,000 per kidnapping."

Cicerone clammed.

"Your line's good," said Shayne.

"He's paid well to be," Cicerone snapped.

He paused as if again debating. Suddenly he left the wing chair, turned to the window, stood with his hands interlocked at the base of his spine, the fingers working reflexively as he stared down on the world. Shayne waited. He knew something was coming. He could feel it in his bones.

Cicerone finally turned. He looked grim. "I received a human heart this morning. It is in a box in the other room if you care to see it. It was delivered by a boy of probably twelve or thirteen who said a man gave him five dollars to bring the box here. We checked the boy. He didn't lie. The heart was a warning. My grandson has been kidnapped. The kidnappers are asking five million dollars. I will receive my grandson's heart if I do not pay."

VII

"LITTLE ANTONE—Joseph Antonio Ratalli. He's nine years old. If they kill him, Shayne, I'll wipe out every punk on the East Coast."

Mike Shayne knew he was witness to a rare moment. Antonio Cicerone had lost his cool. Poise and reason were suddenly drowned in fear. The redhead lit a cigarette, remained silent, waited.

Cicerone needed to let off steam, drain the poison from his system. Only then would his thinking gears mesh smoothly again. Only then could they pry into this latest move against the mob.

Cicerone returned to his window, looked down. Shayne smoked. Silence hung. Finally Cicerone turned around, looked at the detective. He seemed to have gathered himself. He had some color now and his black eyes had come alive.

"None of my boys hit Gentry," he said flatly. "I'm sorry he got knocked down. But he shouldn't have involved himself. We take care of our own problems."

"Kidnapping is a crime no matter who is kidnapped," Shayne replied. He pulled on his cigarette and snubbed it. "And Gentry is a cop."

"I hear he's in a coma, unable to talk."

"That's right."

"Too bad. Maybe we could learn something."

"Why, isn't your line at headquarters that good?" Shayne said sarcastically. "He didn't find out what Gentry and Louie talked about?"

Cicerone ignored the sarcasm. "I'd hoped we could get to Louie before it was too late.

It figured that if Gentry got hit, Louie was on the list. But these boys move fast, Shayne. They've got their pipelines, too."

"Maybe right here in your house, huh?"

Cicerone's stare pinned Shayne to the chair. "You wanna run that one past again?"

"Your grandson," Shayne prodded. "How, when and where was he snatched?"

"We're talking about Gentry and—"

"Yeah, I know. But let's take it from another angle for a few seconds, Antonio. Your grandson."

Cicerone blinked a couple of times and then he said gruffly, "Little Antone plays Little League ball every Saturday morning. He was on his way to the field a couple of hours ago. As far as we know, he was alone.

"He didn't get to the field. Somebody out there called his mother, wanted to know if Little Antone was gonna show. That was our tip."

"And when was Louie's heart delivered?"

"I was opening the box when I got the call from Little Antone's mother."

"Which tells us something. There's a tie: Louie, Gentry, Little Antone."

Cicerone stared. "Feed, Shayne. Don't stop there."

"Louie sets up a meet with Gentry for Thursday night. It's supposed to be top secret, Louie and Gentry very closed mouth. But the word gets out anyway. Don't ask me how. I don't know. Maybe the guy who feeds Louie the info Louie's going to pass on to Gentry has another pal somewhere. Maybe Louie is on the phone and is overheard. Maybe there's a bug on Gentry's line at headquarters.

"The point is, the word gets dribbled around and it scares people. The people lay out a counterattack. They figure to hit Louie and Gentry fast. They do, but then they run into a small problem with Will. He doesn't die. He's in a coma. He could wake up and talk, pass on whatever it was he got from Louie. That information might not buy apples. On the other hand, it could queer the world to certain people. You following me so far, Antonio?"

"Keep talking."

"Gentry's alive. He got vital info from Louie. Another skull session. The end to tapping the mob is on the horizon. Okay, so somebody has to hit fast and big, make the take heavy enough this time to get comfortably lost. Antonio Cicerone himself is a big target,

but not only is Antonio difficult to get to—he's the paymaster. So pick up his grandson, hit Antonio where it really hurts. How am I doing?"

"For the first time in a long time, Shayne, I could kill—personally," Cicerone graveled.

"A $100,000 occasionally can be taken off the top somewhere," Shayne continued. "Five million is something else. Antonio Cicerone has to be frightened inside out. So you return to a cadaver, cut out the heart and send it to Cicerone, timing yourself so Cicerone gets the package about the same time his grandson disappears."

"Yeah, yeah," Cicerone said impatiently, "I get that picture, okay. But—"

"So who knows little Antone goes to a Little League ball field every Saturday morning?" Shayne shot at him. "Or tell me you don't talk about your grandson and Little League baseball around here."

Cicerone flushed and slammed a fist against a palm. He opened his mouth, and then closed it without saying anything. He whirled to his window, stood looking out for a long time. Finally he said in a surprisingly soft voice, "You make sense, Shayne."

"These other kidnappings," Shayne pressed. "I hear the

victims were friends of yours who came in from out of town. Somebody had to know when they were coming, when they were here, where they were hanging hats."

"Yeah, yeah."

"So put it together."

Cicerone turned from the window and nodded. "I've been suspicious for a helluva long time, Shayne. Someone in my organization is feeding marks, but I haven't found the bastard."

"These earlier snatches," Shayne continued. "What do you know about them? You've talked to the victims after the payoffs. What have you turned up?"

"Nothing."

"Come on."

"Why should I?"

"Because you had me brought here this morning, man. What the hell for? And don't give me any crap about wanting to know why I went searching for Louie the Eel.

You know damn well why I wanted him. No—you had me brought here because you want to retain me. Up to now, nothing about the kidnapings has been personal. But now it is. Little Antone is your grandson. Time is precious this trip. You can't sit back this time and hold a family powwow to debate if the victim is worth paying the ransom. Okay, I'll take ten thousand right now. I'll take another ten thousand if I turn up your kidnapers. And I'll take an additional ten thousand if you get Little Antone back alive."

"I'm not working for you, friend. Understand that. I don't work for mobsters. But I'm going after the bastard who cut down Gentry, and it could be I'll turn up a little boy and some kidnapers. If I do, I want to be paid, or I just go home and get a good night's sleep."

"Shayne," Cicerone said, his voice harsh in softness, "you're a sonofabitch."

"Ten thousand, pal. Then tell me what you know about those kidnapers—or is someone going to serve morning tea now?"

VIII

MIKE SHAYNE pocketed the check. He was being greedy. The greed didn't bother him one ounce. He had something he'd wanted to do for a long time. Cicerone's cash was to allow the pleasure.

"How many people am I looking for?" the big detective asked.

"Five men," Cicerone said, his voice having gone to gruffness. "But no one has ever seen their faces or heard them speak. One thing we know, though. They're street snatchers. A car slides up, a guy is hustled inside from a sidewalk by a couple of hooded dudes. Hooded sort of like these Klan people. And they stay hooded. They also converse by sign language, you know, like deaf mutes. One of our boys got a peek out from under his hood. Not much more, but it was enough to count bodies and to know why all the quiet."

"The cars. Different heaps each time?"

"Yeah."

"Stolen."

"Probably."

"Everybody been held at the same place until you make the payoff?"

"As close as we can figure. An apartment house maybe. Always lots of foot traffic overhead, street noise, kids yelling, that kind of jazz. Musty, damp smell. Probably a basement."

"This guy who got the look, couldn't he tell?"

"He figures he was in a living room of sorts, concrete brick walls painted a light blue. But it smelled damp. Still could be a basement."

"And?"

"Lots of air traffic. Makes my people think the pad might be out around International someplace, maybe under a regular flight pattern. There's been plenty of planes overhead, my friends remember, day and night, most of them low."

"What about the payoffs? How and where?"

"Not much to them, really," Cicerone scowled. "They give us a couple of days to put together the money and then comes the drop. It's simple, but it works. They drive up to a designated intersection. It's night, always at night. Hooded guy driving, hooded guy in the back seat holding a knife to the throat of a hodded passenger up front. That passenger, of course, is our man. We drop the package of green inside the car and they drive away, taking our boy. When they're sure they aren't being followed, they dump him."

"Any of your people ever threatened with a ride out to a swamp?"

"Naw."

"But this time you get a heart delivered to your doorstep," Shayne said. "And they snatch your grandson. They also have upped the ante to beat hell. Five million. Somebody is preparing to close shop. A million each, five guys can leave the country, go their own ways, live the good life. You want to buy that?"

Cicerone nodded.

"How about the bundle? You got it?"

"I'm getting it."

"From Vegas?"

Cicerone turned briefly sour.

"I have friends," he said. "And maybe one or two of them do happen to live in Vegas. So?"

"How much time have you got?"

"There's a 9:45 non-stop flight out of International to New York tomorrow night. The cash is to be shipped aboard that flight."

"Shipped. That's different than the other payoffs."

"Yeah."

"So how do you find the boy after the plane takes off?"

Cicerone's mouth became a taut line. It was as if he wasn't sure how to answer. Then he said: "That's what's eating at me, Shayne. These bastards didn't say where I might find Little Antone. And it's scaring me. It's scaring hell out of me."

Shayne scowled deeply and

grunted. Cicerone had reason to be frightened. Bluntly put, Little Antone might already be dead, his heart being prepared for delivery.

The detective heaved up out of the chair. "Cicerone, if I should happen to turn up these creeps they go to the cops—at least, four of them will. Number Five might not make it. If he does he will consider himself lucky. Understand?"

"I'll hear, Shayne," the mobster nodded. He looked grim. "I don't need reports from you. I keep tabs. And having them brought to me or not doesn't make that much difference. They're dead men once I know who they are. I don't give a damn if they're alone in a rowboat in the middle of the Atlantic."

Shayne left the high rise with his .45 snug in his shoulder holster. He was taken downtown and let out at a car rental agency. He rented a powerful sedan and headed toward police headquarters. Len Sturgis needed to be filled in. Then the redhead had a second thought. He turned in at a shopping center parking lot and braked in a stall.

No one seemed to be trailing him, but he sat for a few minutes with an eye on the rear view mirror, watching the cars that curved into the lot behind him, watching where they were braked, inventorying the drivers when they got out. If one of the drivers didn't vacate. . .

Cicerone might have a tail on him. Sturgis could've ordered a shadow after the car bombing, and there was the man or men who had hooked up the bomb. They could've been in the crowd after the explosion, know they had bungled the job. They could try again.

A black sedan was braked in the stall beside Shayne. The lone driver looked over at the detective and then left the sedan. He came around the front of the rent car and plopped on the seat beside Shayne. The detective groaned. "Get lost, Painter."

Peter Painter looked angry. "You just came from Antonio Cicerone. Give."

"And you're out of your jurisdiction. Vanish."

"A near-dead girl was found in my jurisdiction this morning, Shayne. A hooker named Mary Brown. She stayed alive long enough to tell me what a nice guy you are. Somebody else wasn't so damned nice to her. Two boys worked her over good."

"Who?" Shayne snapped.

"A couple of goons. That's all she knew. They came out of nowhere after she'd talked to you, chopped her down, made

her spill about what you were after. She thought she might get reprieve if she talked. She didn't She got dumped for dead on one of my beaches."

Shayne's thoughts raced. Something nasty was shaping.

"Put it together, Shayne," Painter demanded. "All of the connections. You, Gentry, Louie the Eel, Mary Brown, Cicerone—and whoever in hell it was who bombed you earlier this morning."

Shayne had a couple of things put together in his mind now, but he'd also already decided not to give Peter Painter the time of day.

"Bug," he said.

Painter snarled, "Sturgis told me you'd gone to Cicerone. You were up there for an hour and then you got a nice, polite ride downtown where you rented this car. You working for the hoods now, Shayne? Eyes can do that, I guess. Go where the grass is green."

"Get out of the car, Painter," Shayne growled. "I don't know who killed Mary. I don't know who shot Gentry. But it's one package, and I'm hunting. And if you've talked to Len Sturgis, you know where Cicerone fits. If you don't, it's because Sturgis didn't want to tell you. That's his prerogative. He's top cop in this thing at the moment."

Shayne started the sedan motor. Painter hesitated and glowered. Then he left the car. Shayne pulled out, leaving the Miami Beach chief of detectives standing in the hot sun on the parking lot.

The redhead used the streets of Miami for half an hour before he was satisfied he did not have another tail. He had been lax about extra shadows in the last thirty-six hours, primarily because they hadn't been expected. But he didn't want a tail now. He didn't want anyone, including Sturgis, to know his next move.

He used a public pay phone to make the call. He had to explain more than he cared to do, but the man insisted. Then the man agreed to the rendezvous and Shayne drove to the Holiday Inn and registered as William Baxter.

Harrison Moore, the FBI's new chief resident agent, arrived alone at the motel unit at noon straight up. Shayne opened the door to Moore. They'd never met, but Will Gentry was a mutual acquaintance and Gentry was sold on Moore. That was enough for Shayne.

Moore took a chair near the large draped window. He was neat and bulky. He got out a pipe, filled it. Shayne knew he was under scrutiny and he

decided to let Moore satisfy himself. Finally Moore said, "I'm aware of the nature of some recent kidnapings in Miami, Mr. Shayne. That may save you a few words."

Shayne began with the sniping of Gentry and filled in the FBI man in minute detail. He talked for twenty minutes without being interrupted. And when he had finished Moore sat for a few more seconds, mentally digesting while drawing on the dead pipe.

"It seems to me we could have discussed this matter in my office or yours, Mr. Shayne," he said. "Why are we here?"

"There's a pipeline to these kidnapers from somewhere, Moore. Do we agree?"

"We do."

"Until Painter cornered me in the parking lot this morning I figured it could be either at police headquarters or inside Cicerone's organization, and I was leaning to Cicerone's people. But I now lean to headquarters. I was with Gentry when he was knocked down. I went after Louie the Eel from that point, and obviously I was trailed or picked up in my search or Mary Brown never would have been dumped on a beach. Point: why beat on a hooker, why kill her, why dump her on a beach?

"If it had been Cicerone people who got to her, Mary Brown simply would have disappeared after Cicerone got what he wanted. I'm not going to say these kidnap boys are amateurs, but they're not polished, professional mafia people, either."

"All right," Moore agreed. "You have your point, but it still seems we could have discussed this in my office."

"I've got an idea or two," Shayne said. "I want to try them on you for size. And if you should happen to agree with my thinking, I don't think we're going to want the Miami police involved, although God only knows we probably can use some help. Still, a leak could wipe us out. That's why we're here. For the moment, I don't want to be seen with you—by anybody."

"Continue," Moore said calmly.

"Try this. I'm the kidnap gang. I've gone after five million bucks. I want it put aboard a regular Miami to New York jet flight. It's to be shipped. No one carrying the green. That means the money is in the cargo compartment of the plane. So now I want a plane. How do I get it? I hijack it. I'm five hijackers, a gang. I force the pilot to land somewhere, demand a smaller plane. Mean-

while, with hostages, I'm going through the baggage and cargo. I also have five parachutes, shipped by myself. The chutes are in the same cargo. I find the money and the chutes, transfer all to the smaller craft. Still with a hostage or two, I fly out, head for an area or areas staked out long ago.

"Military planes are following. So what? It's night. Who can see? And I've got my own chutes. No electronic bugs. I can bail out collectively at a spot or individually at five spots. What do you think, Moore?"

"Plausible," he agreed thoughtfully, sucking the pipe.

"I don't think these guys are stupid enough to have the money shipped to New York and attempt a pickup on that end," Shayne continued. "They know Cicerone, and they know he has friends in New York, people who will meet a plane."

"Un-huh," Moore nodded. "Except the Ratalli boy is insurance, of course. As long as they have him, as long as Cicerone thinks or hopes his grandson is alive, he won't move. Which means a pickup could be made at Kennedy."

Shayne shook his head. "But why have the money shipped? They could set up a drop here, just like they've done the other four times out. No, the shipping is the key, Moore. These boys are going to be aboard that plane. All five of them, I figure. No one of them is going to trust another when they're dealing in millions. This is their big kill."

"Speaking of kills," the FBI man said, putting away his pipe and standing, "you know you're out of this now, I assume. I understand your feelings over the sniping of your friend, Will Gentry, but this is a Bureau case and—"

Shayne waved a hand, shutting off the agent.

"I'm tagging along," he said flatly. "You need me. You're going to put people aboard the flight. I'm going to be one of them, in disguise. I know a guy who can fix me so even you wouldn't recognize me. He was a makeup expert in Hollywood several years ago. He's retired, living here in Miami. But he still has his tools and his skill. I

figure I'm going to be able to spot one of these hoods for you, Moore. I figure one of them is going to be a guy I recognize. You can stand to have that edge, can't you?"

Moore didn't change expressions.

"And if you're going to use local agents," Shayne pressed, "you might want them to visit my pal, too. Some of your people aren't exactly strangers at police headquarters."

Moore grunted. "You seem positive a local policeman is a member of this kidnap gang."

"It's more than sixth sense buzzing now, friend," Shayne said grimly. "I've got a name. But I'm not fingering the bastard yet because I can't prove anything and he could squirm out from under, which would turn me inside out."

Moore seemed to go into deep thought. His jaw muscles tightened slightly, worked, and Shayne knew the FBI man wasn't seeing anything although he stared. Finally Moore reached a decision. He seemed to relax, and he almost smiled as he looked at the redhead.

"Gentry told me not too long ago that if and when our paths ever crossed, Shayne, I'd find you to be a stubborn, hardnosed Irish mick. Of course, he also mentioned that you're a fair hand in a scrap. Your future involvement in this matter is against all Bureau rules, but there are times when rules can be bent a bit, I suppose."

Shayne's estimation of Harrison Moore climbed about forty-five notches.

"And now shall we contact an airline official?" Moore said, eyebrows lifted slightly.

"Let's," said the detective.

IX

PAUL J. ANDREWS was lanky, almost suave, and disturbed. He'd been yanked from a country club golf course on a bright Saturday afternoon. But he also was an airline executive, dedicated to the line, and vehement after he had been briefed.

"Someone has to do something about these hijackings!" he stormed. "They must be halted!"

"We intend to stop this one, Mr. Andrews," Harrison Moore said, clipping the words.

"Except," Andrews said coldly, "there isn't going to be a hijacking this time. I won't permit it. The 9:45 Sunday night flight isn't going to leave the ground. I won't endanger the lives of innocent people or take a chance on losing a carrier. If I have to, Mr. Moore, I'll call the FAA in Washington

and we'll see who wins between those people and the FBI."

"I've got an idea," Shayne put in. "Anybody care to listen?"

"Our carrier won't leave the ground," Andrews repeated.

"On what explanation to your passengers?" Shayne snapped. "Miami to New York non-stop jet figures to be one of your best flights, probably near capacity."

"It is, Mr. Shayne," Andrews agreed icily. "But it still will not leave the ground. We will develop mechanical trouble."

"Un-huh," nodded the detective. "And your passengers are going to start honking about using another plane."

"We will manage not to have one available," Andrews said.

"Look," Shayne said, seeking patience with the airline man, "a kid's life is at stake. We've got to do something. If you cancel that flight and not make another plane available, somebody is going to smell something. A kid could die, and a whole damned airport could get shot up.

"We've got five desperate guys and five million bucks involved. These boys aren't going to walk away from that five million because some voice in a box says the flight has been cancelled. They're going to make a stab at getting the money *some*way. A lot of people could get hurt, some might die—and you can see future lawsuits in that, can't you?

"Andrews, like you, I wished to hell these boys had picked some other airline. I don't figure you can see beyond the end of your own precious nose. I'd like to be sitting here talking to someone from another line, someone with a little savvy, someone with—"

"I don't have to take this!" Andrews snarled, his voice shrilling. He snapped up out of his chair.

"Sit down, shut up and listen!" Shayne shouted in return.

He moved out to the edge of his chair. He didn't take his eyes from the red-faced Andrews but he expected Harrison Moore to step in. He waited. Andrews glowered. And Moore remained silent.

Shayne gave Moore another silent pat on the back and then he said, calming his tone, "Andrews, nobody wants the flight to get off the ground. These people have to be overpowered before takeoff. If we could, we'd put together a fake group of passengers composed of Moore's agents, but we obviously can't do that since we don't know on sight the five men we are after. So we're

going to have to go along with the regular passenger list.

"Now, what we need from you is a voluntary crew, people who will be briefed in secret by Moore. And we have to make all preparations for takeoff, everything normal. Then at the last minute one of your people can announce to the plane that something is wrong with the power on one side of the craft and that the passengers will have to transfer to another plane. In that same announcement, Andrews—and this is important—the passengers are to be informed that it will be impossible to transfer baggage. The baggage will follow on another flight.

"Sure, you're going to get some howls, maybe even a couple of cancellations, but most of the people will transfer. I don't think the five guys we want will. I don't think they are going to leave five million bucks. Who knows what they will do, but that's not your concern. That belongs to us."

Shayne looked at the FBI man suddenly. "How does it shape? What do you think?"

Moore was deep in thought. And, surprisingly, Andrews remained silent. Moore paced the room for a few seconds, dragging on the dead pipe.

"Okay," he said finally. "It keeps the original plane and the ransom on the ground, it gets the passengers clear, and it forces the hand of the people we want. Not bad, Shayne. Maybe we can polish it here and there, but it's not bad the way it is."

X

MIKE SHAYNE had a new face. His cheekbones were high, his nose long and slender, his jaw jutted. He also wore a wig, the deep brown hair falling full and long from in front of his ears to behind his neck. He was dressed in modern priest garb: dark maroon coat and trousers, white collar. A slight hump had been built across his shoulder blades. Even his hands had been changed. Now they looked cared for, almost delicate, his fingers shaped like those of a concert pianist.

It had been with a certain amount of lighthearted glee that he had tried out the disguise on the bartender at the Seafarer, on Lucy Hamilton, his secretary, and Tim Rourke, the newspaperman. He had entered the restaurant, pitched his voice, ordered a light bourbon and water from the bartender, carried on a light conversation, then phoned Lucy and Tim, using his own voice in placing the calls.

They had arrived within five

minutes of each other and Shayne had enjoyed sitting at the bar and listening to the talk—even George had joined the group.

"He told me he was calling from here," Rourke said, looking around again. "But I don't see him. Are you sure Mike wasn't in here earlier, George?"

"Tim," said George, "could I miss Mike Shayne walkin' through my door?"

"I don't understand," Lucy Hamilton said, sounding truly puzzled.

"Buy these two a round, Salty," Shayne said to the bartender in his normal voice. He laughed at the expressions.

Now he sat in a first class seat in the jetliner, watching the passengers stream in. He recognized the occasional FBI agent who moved past. None was from the Florida area. They had been brought in by Moore. In his disguise, he had met all of them in various motel rooms late that Sunday afternoon. The meetings had been enough to allow recognition of each other, no more.

Harrison Moore would not board the plane, but he was nearby. As was Tim Rourke who, Shayne knew, was now sitting slumped in his car in a parking lot off in the distance. Rourke had wanted to be on hand for the action. A great newspaper story was shaping. But Rourke could be recognized by a member of the kidnap gang if Shayne's thinking was on target. So Rourke, with some reluctance, had agreed to remain out of sight in a parking lot until 9:45, the scheduled hour of the takeoff. By then the transfer of passengers would be under way and the newspaperman could streak through the terminal.

Lucy Hamilton had wanted to be on the scene, too, but she had not said a word in protest when Shayne had explained that she, too, could be recognized. And Shayne knew where to find her when all of this was finished. George, the unpronounceable Greek, was an expert at easing worries.

An FBI agent took the seat across the aisle from Shayne. He was a young man, clean, neat. He could have been a teacher, a lawyer, a shoe clerk. Or he might even have been one of Cicerone's boys. Shayne wondered: how many men did Cicerone have aboard?

Two men entered the plane up front. They did not hesitate, but their eyes swept the first class compartment before they sat in the first seats. Shayne pinched his false nose, sliding a glance at the FBI man across the aisle. The man tugged at his

ear, looked out the window. The message had been passed. The FBI man had caught Shayne's signal. He had the duo spotted.

Shayne shifted his feet in satisfaction. Everything was clicking, falling into place. Two members of the kidnap gang were up front in first class, another probably was up front in the coach section, and two more probably were at the rear of the coach section. From these vantages, the five could control the passenger area of the aircraft during flight. But the real birth of the redhead's good feeling was in nonrecognition.

Miami police detective Dan Donovan had looked straight at the mod priest with the long hair and the long face and had not recognized Michael Shayne.

When Shayne had decided that a detective cop had to be feeding the kidnap gang or be a member of that gang, he figured he knew why Gentry had been sour Friday morning, he figured he knew what Louie had passed on, but he had not been sure which detective was involved. That was the reason he had not given Harrison Moore a name.

But it all had fallen together now: Donovan in on the quiet investigation of the mob kidnapings of Gentry, Donovan told by Gentry that a meet with Louie the Eel was in the offing, Donovan positioning himself so that he could move out of police headquarters then turn back, be a signal to a sniper, safely ahead of Gentry's Friday morning exit. Donovan being in position to learn that a revenge-minded private detective was out for blood. Donovan tipping other members of the gang about where to look for the prowling private eye. Donovan—fearing the eye—knowing where a car could be bombed.

Yeah, it all fit. If only Will Gentry had braced Donovan immediately following the meet with Louie, then none of this would have happened. But Shayne knew why Gentry had not braced. Gentry would weigh. Louie the Eel was not the most reputable man on the street. The weighing had got Gentry a slug. . .

A pert, cool stewardess made the announcement shortly after the power for the jet had been turned on. One of the jet motors was not functioning to maximum. A transfer to another plane was required.

"However, we will be unable to transfer baggage," said the stewardess apologetically. "Baggage will follow on another craft. Now, if you will please leave by the front exit—"

The stewardess' voice trailed

off as Dan Donovan and his companion stood and Donovan put the muzzle of a snub-nosed revolver against the girl's neck.

"Ask the captain to come out here, please," Donovan said. He offered no explanation to the startled passengers.

The gang moved like an oiled machine. Three members remained aboard and kept the passengers under control with palmed guns while Donovan and his companion took the captain out of the plane and around to the baggage door. A baggage crew was returned to the plane and the door was opened. The bag with the money was found. And then the passengers were left to follow their wishes while five men hustled the captain and the bag of money back inside the terminal.

Shayne and the FBI agents who had been on board loped at a distance behind the kidnapers. Shayne saw a man he knew to be an agent move toward Donovan and his cohorts from inside the terminal. There were stirrings all over the terminal, other agents who were restless. The agent curved off suddenly as he saw the gun held on the plane captain. Others saw too, and the stirrings settled.

Donovan and his pals took the captain outside the terminal

building, where they commandeered a station wagon at gunpoint. Piling inside the wagon they zoomed away, leaving the captain at the curbing.

Mike Shayne tensed, but before he could move an even stranger thing happened. Careening out of a dark corner of the parking lot, a sleek black car exploded like a torpedo squarely in front of the station wagon, hitting it broadside and shattering glass with a crackling roar. The two vehicles seemed to lift slightly in the sound of crumbling metal and splitting glass. They settled and were still.

Almost simultaneously, a man vaulted the rail by the parking lot, smashed in a half shattered window of the station wagon, reached inside and vanished back into the shadows like an evil phantom, with at least two wild bullets vainly exploring the darkness into which he had vanished.

Shayne broke for the smashed cars. There was the sound of pounding footsteps all around him. A gun snapped from the station wagon and the whizz of a bullet sent the detective into a headlong dive. More shots were fired. A bullet whistled past Shayne's ear as he skidded, chin down, along concrete. He felt the skidding shred his mask.

He rolled. Screams and shouts filled his ears. He continued to roll until he slammed against the base of a palm tree. He wiggled in behind the tree and brought the .45 down, sighting it. But all he had was a lurching mass of bodies before him, men struggling with other men, two locked bodies rolling on the street. Agents and hoods were in hand-to-hand combat.

Shayne leaped to his feet and plunged toward the melee. And then he heard Tim Rourke's shout: "Mike, Mike, over here!"

Shayne curved off and spotted Rourke running across the parking lot. The sighting shattered one thought he'd had. He had figured it might have been Rourke who had smashed into the station wagon, but Rourke was running toward the crumpled cars.

Shayne heard the shot and saw Rourke spin off and go down. The redhead shouted and careened around the back of the station wagon. He was in a shadow as he pulled up short and crouched. Caught in the headlights of the wrecked vehicles was Dan Donovan, who had a forearm locked across the throat of Harrison Moore. Moore was arched backward, his hands clawing the forearm.

Shayne surveyed swiftly.

Donovan was moving backward with Moore. He had the muzzle of a gun jammed against Moore's ear. Then Shayne caught movement in the corner of his eye. The movement was far off to his left. He saw Rourke coming up from the pavement of the parking lot. He snapped a look at Donovan. Donovan was bringing the gun around.

"Down, Tim!"

Rourke plunged and Donovan blasted a shot toward the detective. Splitting car glass crackled above Shayne's head.

Shayne used his left forearm for a gun rest and sighted carefully. Donovan's face, caught in an expression of desperation, seemed propped on Moore's right shoulder. The face was a small target. A miss could hang up a private detective for good. Donovan fired again and the bullet opened a hole in the side of the station wagon near Shayne's ear.

He drew a breath, held it and squeezed the trigger of the .45. The face of Dan Donovan split. Then it spilled blood down the front of Harrison Moore.

XI

THE FOUR live members of the kidnap gang were hustled away by FBI agents while Mike Shayne continued to seeth. "One of them belongs to me, Moore!" he snarled, watching taillights disappear.

"Does he?" Moore said, continuing to clean himself.

Shayne shuffled. He felt charged all out of proportion.

"Mike?"

Shayne whirled at the sound of Tim Rourke's voice. Rourke was grinning as he looked at a hole in his coat sleeve. The hole was tinged with blood.

"I got nicked," he said, holding up his arm as if it were a badge. "Maybe I'll get a vacation. You know, wounded in the line of duty, all that jazz."

Shayne felt himself relax suddenly. All of the steam seemed to go out of him as if he was a pricked balloon. He stood for a moment in wonder of body chemistry and then he grunted abruptly and jammed the .45 into his shoulder holster. He looked around. The excitement was dying fast.

Most of the airport crowd had moved out. There were lingerers, of course, but airport police held them far back. Shayne saw a familiar face, was briefly surprised, then started to shout. But Antonio Cicerone disappeared quickly.

"Ahhh," said Harrison Moore.

"Ahhh?" Shayne looked at

the FBI agent. "So what does that mean?"

"So now we know who had the station wagon rammed." Moore nodded to himself. "And we know where a missing five million dollars is."

"Missing?"

"Gone from the wagon before we got to it," Moore said.

A thought hit Shayne: Cicerone made decisions, pulled strings, gave orders, but never appeared on the scene of action. Why had he appeared tonight?

Unless it was to collect a grandson.

Shayne pounded off toward the rented car he had left in the parking lot. He didn't even slow down with Tim Rourke's startled yelp. He drove to a high rise palace where he found a penthouse party in progress. Some of the guests gave his tattered disguise curious glances then went back to the party.

Shayne stared at Antonio Cicerone who was all health and smiles as he sat in a wing chair with a nine-year-old boy on his lap.

"How?" the detective snapped.

Cicerone grinned. "Shayne, meet Little Antone, the smartest boy in all Miami. They take him along for insurance. They're gonna take him to New York, collect. They know nobody is gonna move while they've got Little Antone. But Little Antone, he's smart too. He figures this, and he figures a couple of other things. He figures that if he makes a break at International nobody is gonna cut him down, nobody is gonna risk losing five million just when they're boarding a plane, nobody is gonna—"

"Knock it," Shayne said flatly. "A nine-year-old kid doesn't think that way. Not even your grandson."

Cicerone paused, his face suddenly blank. "Okay, so they're waltzing the boy across International, and he knows things aren't right, and he gets a chance to break, and he takes it. Then he cons some doll out of a dime so he can use a phone and call his grandpa. It's still smart, isn't it? I wish I knew who that doll was. She'd live good the rest of her life."

"First, I'll take a check for $20,000," Shayne said. "That's before you go looking for a doll."

Cicerone shook his head. "Ten. Little Antone got back on his own."

"Twenty," Shayne insisted. "I know some other people who'd like to live good."

"Who?"

"Write, Cicerone."

He stared for a few seconds

and then he went into another room and scribbled a check. Shayne put it with the $10,000 check in his pocket. As the detective was departing Cicerone said, "Tell me someday, Shayne, where it went."

Shayne drove to the Seafarer. Lucy Hamilton was nowhere in sight but Salty was behind the bar and grinning. He stabbed a finger toward a phone booth. Lucy waved from the booth, snapped the door open.

"I'm talking to Mrs. Gentry," she said, eyes beaming. "Will came out of the coma. He's had surgery, and he's doing fine, Michael!"

Monday morning, Shayne deposited the two Antonio Cicerone checks in his personal bank account. Monday afternoon, he stopped in to see Gentry and then he drove across the city to St. Vincent's Hospital for Crippled Children, where he grinned on another Irish mick: Sister Mary Elizabeth Dougherty.

"Michael," said Sister Mary Elizabeth, blowing daintily on Shayne's $30,000 check, "I just might have a bit of cognac stored somewhere. And some ice water."

"Show me," grinned Mike Shayne.

He felt good. He felt like Robin Hood in a battered hat and a scabbed face, but he felt good.

Read . . . In the NEXT issue . . . Exclusively Yours . . .

WEEKENDS ARE FOR KILLING.

The New Complete MIKE SHAYNE Short Novel

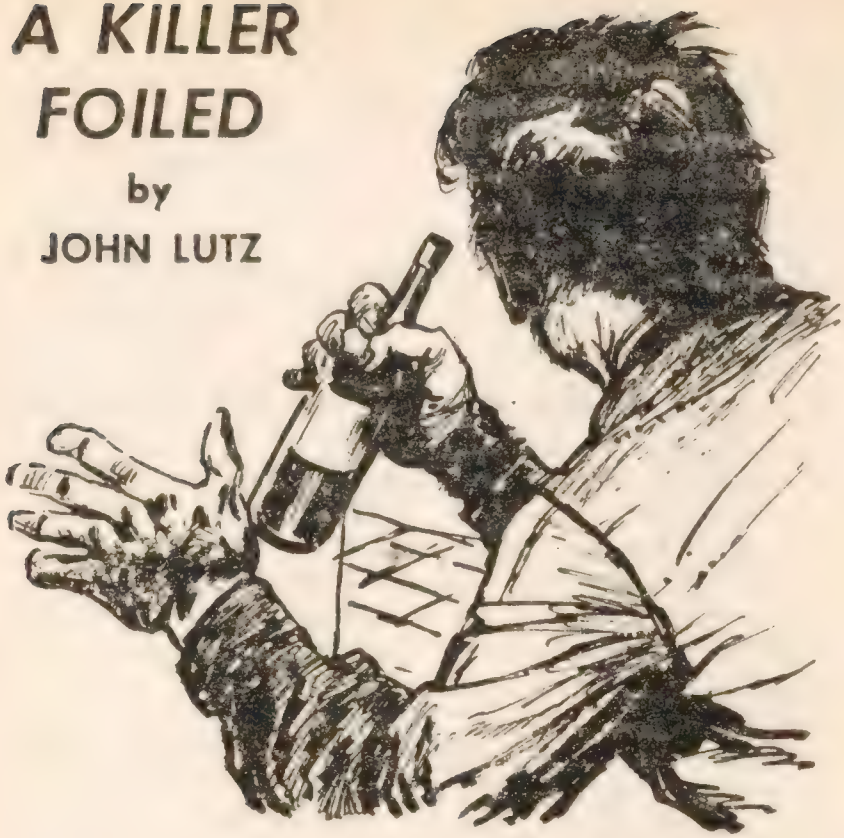
by BRETT HALLIDAY

"The Man With Two Mouths," they called him in the Brotherhood, and this day he had death on his mind, facing Mike Shayne. He smiled and it was like the black hood of doom. "You're a dead man, Shayne," he said. "Do like I say and it won't hurt." He grinned again. "I know how to kill, man!" Don't miss the danger-flecked novel about a man who would have all Miami at his mercy—unless Mike Shayne could stop him!

A KILLER FOILED

by

JOHN LUTZ



He was only a broken down cop who liked his booze too well. But he could teach a rookie a lot about certain things—messy little things like Murder. . .

WILMA VERNER'S body was carried out of the house on a flimsy looking canvas stretcher between two men in white. She was completely covered by a sheet that swept in a flowing, graceful fold between the rises of her feet and breasts. Her husband, Harry Verner, turned his back as she passed.

Lieutenant Detective Rathers turned to Sergeant Clark as the ambulance doors slammed shut outside. "Well," he said, "I'm still waiting for your friend Bratten."

"He'll be here," Sergeant Clark said calmly. "It's only eleven o'clock."

The sergeant enjoyed playing the old pro around Lieutenant Rathers, who was of the new scientific school and shunned most if not all of the old and

tested methods. The sergeant, being one of those who tested them, knew better.

"I never heard anything good about this Bratten man," Lieutenant Rathers said. "I understand he was Chief of Homicide out west until he drank himself out of the job and then off the force entirely. What is he now, just a private investigator?"

"No," Sergeant Clark said, striking a match to light a cigar, "he lost his license."

Lieutenant Rathers almost, but not quite, rolled his eyes. If it weren't for the knowledge that the captain had given Sergeant Clark the go-ahead on calling in this Bratten man Lieutenant Rathers would show this old fool some brisk, efficient police work.

"Why don't you go lay down for a while, Mr. Verner?" Sergeant Clark was saying. "We'll be through here in a while."

Harry Verner, who had been standing staring at the blank wall behind the sofa, turned, managed a smile and nodded.

They watched him walk slowly from the living room toward the stairs that led to the upper bedrooms.

"It still looks like suicide to me," Lieutenant Rathers said when Verner was out of earshot up the stairs.

"Could be you're right," the sergeant said in an unconcerned voice, just as a car door slammed outside. "That's probably Bratten."

Lieutenant Rathers walked to the window and looked out. Behind his gleaming and chromed police cruiser an old, incredibly dented black Ford was now parked, a slowly widening puddle of oil beneath it.

There were two loud knocks and the front door opened. A short, blocky man of about forty entered as if a hurricane about which he was mildly annoyed had blown him inside. His thick dark hair was mussed, there was an angry squint to his right eye and his loud tie was hanging crooked across the lapel of his rumpled suit.

"Bratten," Sergeant Clark said, "thanks for coming."

"Give me a drink," Bratten said, eyeing a small bar near the hall to the kitchen.

The sergeant walked over and poured a straight Scotch. He had warned Lieutenant Rathers about Louis Bratten's eccentric behavior, pointing out that the little man was an undisputed genius with his own strange method of working. He hoped the lieutenant wouldn't say anything to get Bratten mad.

"Is it necessary to drink while you examine the facts?" Lieutenant Rathers asked.

"Nothing's necessary," Bratten said, accepting the Scotch. "Who's this?"

"Lieutenant Rathers," Sergeant Clark said, "This is Louis Bratten."

"I've heard about you," Lieutenant Rathers said in a voice that might be taken two ways.

Bratten settled himself in a comfortable looking chair. "What are these facts you were talking about?" he asked.

It was the sergeant who filled in. "We got a call to come out here three hours ago. A neighbor who usually comes over for coffee on Friday morning found the body of Mrs. Verner still in bed under the covers, dead.

"A note?" Bratten asked.

The sergeant shook his head no. "We searched the house thoroughly and came up with a glass that milk had been drunk out of, lying in the sink with a dozen other dirty glasses. There were traces of strychnine in it."

"Any prints?"

"Wilma Verner's. The husband, Harry Verner, was in Chicago on a bi-monthly business trip. He's a vice president of a manufacturing company with plants here and in Chicago. He was with friends last night, too, over a thousand miles away at the time of his wife's death."

Bratten finished off his Scotch. "Which was at what time?"

"Approximately eleven o'clock last night," Lieutenant

Rathers cut in, obviously becoming annoyed by Bratten's curt methods.

"Interesting," Bratten said, handing his empty glass to the sergeant for a refill.

"That isn't water," the lieutenant said as Bratten sipped his second drink.

"No," Bratten agreed, "it's good Scotch." He squinted up at Sergeant Clark. "Find any other drugs in the house?"

"We searched the medicine cabinets," Clark said. "Found the usual things—bottle of aspirins, cough syrup, birth control pills, bottle of Super Cold Away Plus."

"Anybody with a motive?" Bratten asked.

"Well," Sergeant Clark said after a hesitation, "Wilma Verner had confided to a few friends that she and her husband weren't getting along, and six months ago she called the third district and said she was afraid someone was trying to kill her. They put it

down for a crank call because she wouldn't go into detail. Now she's dead. The lieutenant thinks it was suicide."

"That figures," Bratten said.

"It isn't unusual for a neurotic, suicidal woman to imagine someone is out to get her," Lieutenant Rathers said.

Bratten savored another generous sip of Scotch. "How long ago did Wilma tell her neighbor friends she and her hubby were on the outs?"

"That was almost a year ago," Lieutenant Rathers said in an impatient voice.

"I thought it would be a while," Bratten said.

"What's that supposed to mean?" the lieutenant asked, not trying any longer to conceal his aggravation.

"Quiet," Bratten said. He leaned back and hung one leg over the arm of his chair. "This reminds me of another case I had, a poison case up in Massachusetts."

"We're not interested in reminiscences," the lieutenant said sharply.

"There are parallels," Bratten went on. "A man in that case set out to poison his wife too. She always drank a cocktail before dinner, using the glasses one by one from a revolving tray. She would place the used glasses in her dishwasher and leave them there through daily washings, then when the revolving tray was empty she'd replace all twelve glasses."

Lieutenant Rathers snorted impatiently and smiled a hopeless, faintly superior sort of smile.

"Hang on and you'll learn, Junior," Bratten said. "Anyway, our man got into the habit of going to a local tavern almost every evening, then he coated one of the glasses on the tray with poison and made it a point not to be home at dinner time. He figured his wife would finally choose the right glass, he'd have a solid alibi, and the rest of the glasses in the tray would be found to be clean. Finally the right glass was chosen, but he hadn't known his wife was tired of him being away nights and was having an affair with his brother. She gave the brother the glass, and our man was so angry he killed her with a hammer and confessed everything."

No one spoke for a long moment.

"Then there was the case of the man with a full beard," Bratten went on.

"Good Lord!" Lieutenant Rathers said. "Full beard—"

Sergeant Clark gave him a cautioning look. He knew how Bratten worked, how his mind was right now evaluating, sorting through the computor bank of his subconscious. Every facet of

every past case was crystalized in Bratten's mind, and the juxtaposition of every past case and the present case was being minutely examined.

"You see," Bratten said, "the intended victim had a full beard that the murderer knew he would shave off sometime that summer. A man with a full beard who hasn't shaved in a long time will usually nick himself removing that beard, so our murderer placed a poison in the after-shave lotion that would prove fatal on entering the bloodstream through even the slightest cut. Then he went off to Europe for the summer to be thousands of miles and several months away at the time of death.

The thing is our bearded man married a beautician that summer who shaved his beard off without a nick, but she mistook the after-shave lotion for perfume one day and the poison entered her bloodstream through a tiny cut made by a rose thorn. Still alive and knowing who had motive to do away with him, it didn't take our clean shaven intended victim long to add two and two and know who killed his new bride. Needless to say she was avenged and the case came to my attention."

"Fascinating," Lieutenant Rathers said in a sarcastic voice. "What you're trying to tell us is that Harry Verner coated that glass with poison before it was used to drink milk and before he left on his business trip."

"No," Bratten said, "he coated it with poison after it was used just to fool such addled brains as yours."

Lieutenant Rathers snorted and glared angrily at Bratten. "Why on earth would he coat a dirty glass with poison?"

Sergeant Clark said nothing, enjoying himself immensely.

"Look around you," Bratten said, "notice that the house is not very clean, dust on the furniture, magazines on the floor by the couch, crooked lampshade."

Lieutenant Rathers' face was red. "Now what's that supposed to mean?"

"It means Wilma Verner was a sloppy housekeeper," Bratten said, "and that her husband could be positive when he left on his business trip yesterday afternoon that she wouldn't wash the dirty dishes in the sink that evening."

"Fascinating but irrelevant," Lieutenant Rathers said venemously. "What has that got to do with boring stories about poisoned cocktail glasses and a bearded man who married a beautician?"

Bratten drained his Scotch and handed the empty glass to Sergeant Clark. "Everything, you idiot. In the cases I told you about the poison was placed

where the victim would take it when the murderer was away with an alibi."

The lieutenant's face was livid now. "But you just stated that Verner coated the glass with poison after it was used!"

"Exactly, you knowledgeable numbskull." Bratten accepted the refilled glass from the sergeant. "Which means that Verner wanted you to think the glass is where the poison came from—which of course you did think. Now in both of the cases I mentioned the murderer had a sort of running alibi of distance and time. He could set his poison out for his victim and wait. But Harry Verner knew he would be in Chicago on business for only one short night."

"So?" the lieutenant asked with a sneer.

Bratten imitated the sneer perfectly and took a gulp of Scotch. "So he had to provide some way to make it look like his wife took poison purposely, and some way for her actually to take poison without her knowing about it. Unlike the murderers in the two cases I mentioned, Verner had to look for a vehicle for the poison that would enter his wife's body at an almost exactly predictable time. So in examining the facts of the case we look for that same thing."

"The birth control pills!" Sergeant Clark murmured, and light dawned in the lieutenant's eyes.

"Correct," Bratten said, spilling some Scotch onto his tie. "Verner knew his wife took them at approximately eleven o'clock every night before going to bed. No doubt the pills she took are the type that are encased in plastic over aluminum foil with the day they are to be taken printed under each pill. If you examine that aluminum foil I suspect you'll find that it wasn't torn naturally when Vilma Verner pushed the last pill through it, and I suspect that what she took was a life preventative in more ways than she knew."

The sergeant and Lieutenant Rathers both bolted for the bathroom medicine cabinet at the same time. Bratten was right. The foil beneath the empty slot for last night's pill wasn't torn but had been cut in a neat X with a raxor blade.

"If you don't mind," Bratten said to Verner as the angry husband was being led away in handcuffs, "I'll have some more of that Scotch."

COMING SOON: ANOTHER NEW STORY BY JOHN LUTZ

STAB & RUN

Money. . .men. . .an apartment fit for a queen. . . the slim blonde temptress knew how to live, all right. Soon—soon now she would learn how to die.

by MAX VAN DERVEER

A COLD DRIZZLE fell to make the afternoon in early April dreary. Sergeant Ralls and I squatted at the side of the pretty girl who was dead in the Savannah Street gutter.

The squad car policeman who had radioed in the hit-and-run had found something extremely puzzling when he had examined the victim. Under a buttoned and belted all-purpose coat a pocket knife was sticking from the girl's chest. The blade of the knife had penetrated a pale green pantsuit and blood had soaked the material.

The knife looked like an ordinary pocket knife that could be purchased in any sporting goods or discount store.

"We've got a witness, Sergeant," said the car patrolman named Dirker. "Brownie's got him in the squad car. Guy named Ed English. Says he saw a Lincoln hit the victim. But that knife. . .that's weird."

The girl had been knocked out of green clogs. Her feet

Featuring

SERGEANT ANDREW WOODCAMP

were bare, the toenails well-shaped and tinted. I studied the tops of the clogs without touching them. I did not find blood spots.

"What do you think, Woody?" Ralls asked.

He was squatted beside a shoulder bag, staring at it. I nodded. He opened the bag and found the usual things, including a thick black wallet with many compartments and cards. The girl's name was Audry Catherine Hopkins. She was twenty-seven, single and a secretary at P.H. Fields Investments Inc. She resided in an apartment at an address on 14th East; it was two blocks back along Savannah and one block to the left. Ralls found $27 in the wallet and a checkbook that showed a balance of $1,756.32.

"Sarge, the witness is gettin' edgy, sittin' in the car," Patrolman Dirker said. His tone mirrored apology.

Ed English was short, lumpy, Negro and forty. He looked like a laborer and a hard worker. Ralls took the two patrolmen, Dirker and Brown, with him to help with the street crowd while he directed the other boys in the cleanup.

"Mr. English, my name is Sergeant Andrew Woodcamp," I said, settling in the front seat of the patrol car beside him. The drizzling rain made no sound against the car, only distorted the view through the windshield. "I understand you saw the victim get struck."

English nodded. "I was comin' through the park back a block, yuh know?" I knew. "Well, I was comin' through, and I seen her get out of this car that was stopped for the red light. No real reason to notice her, 'cept I did. And she was maybe ten, fifteen paces ahead of me when I turned onto the sidewalk. We caught the Walk light, and then when she got this far she all of a sudden cuts between them parked cars and out to the street. It all happened fast. I yelled at her, and so did some other folks, but it was too late. She got smacked by the car."

"I believe you told the patrolmen it was a Lincoln."

"Tha's right. Gray-green, and there was a blonde girl drivin'. She was alone and she never even slowed down. She just cut out."

"Did you happen to get the license number?"

His brown face fell. "Naw," he said.

"Well, do you know what year—"

"I ain't no good on cars, mister, but it was a Linc, I know that. Pretty new, I'd say. Maybe a '70, '71, '72."

"Anything unusual about it? Dents or—"

"Nope."

"But you're sure the driver was a blonde girl."

"I seen her hair, long and blonde. It was rainin', of course, and the rest of her was kinda smeared, but it was a girl driver, all right, blonde hair."

"When you say girl driver, do you mean a teenager?"

"Yeah."

"At the traffic light, I assume the girl got out of the passenger side of the car."

"Yep."

"What kind of a car was that one?"

"A sporty kind. Brown."

"You don't know the make or—"

"I ain't good on cars. It was a sorta squatty car, sorta short, brown."

"Did you happen to pay any attention to the driver?"

"Not much, but I seen him. He sorta bent toward the girl as she got out, and I seen him for a second or two before she slammed the door."

"Would you recognize him if you saw him again?"

"I ain't sure. I might. I'd say he was a young fella, maybe mid-twenties. Naw, look, I'm guessin' on that. I really don't remember him that good."

"Did the girl stagger when she walked?"

"Nope. She walked okay."

"Mr. English, do you know we found a knife sticking in her chest?"

"Yeah, I heard."

"Well, it doesn't seem to me that someone with a knife in her heart would walk normal."

"Me neither, but the girl did, I swear."

"Hmm. It looks like we've got a puzzler, doesn't it?"

"I'm glad I'm a drag operator. I don't have no problems like this. I work for a construction company, mister. Only I ain't workin' today 'cause it's raining."

"Have you time to go down to headquarters?"

"What for?"

"We have a man there who operates a—well, it's something like a movie projector. He puts pictures on a screen. It's like fitting a jigsaw puzzle. He puts up a picture of a forehead and then, he attempts to fit cheekbones, a jawline, eyes, nose. . .and if that doesn't work, he sketches. This man is a pretty good sketcher. You tell him what kind of a face you've seen, for instance, and he sketches that face while he listens to you. I thought maybe if you could describe the man you saw in the parked car, our man could draw his picture."

"I've seen them kind of pictures in the newspapers."

"Yes, you probably have."

"Well, I dunno. Aw heck, Sergeant, let's give it a try. Maybe I can remember something 'bout this guy."

ED ENGLISH went to headquarters in the squad car while Ralls and I drove to the apartment building on 14th East. The building was on an intersection, diagonally across from the park. It was a modern, pink high-rise, wet-looking on the outside and glistening on the inside. A suave-looking man named Oscar Phillips said he was the manager.

"Not the owner, gentlemen," he said. "The manager. This is a P.H. Fields Investments structure." He said it as though the building wouldn't dare to crack in the most violent earthquake.

I explained our presence.

It deflated Phillips for a few seconds. "A tragedy. I can not believe." And then he found helium again. "I assume you wish to examine Miss Hopkins' accomodations?"

The apartment was neat, large, airy. Two windows looked out on the park trees. The kitchen was spotless. Even a red dog bowl on the floor half filled with dry dog food looked in place. The bath was immaculate, the bedroom was every secretary's dream, complete with the framed photograph of a handsome young man. The living room conjured thoughts of intimate nights and leisurely days, and all of it looked very expensive.

The tab, Mr. Phillips said as if he were talking about purchasing a six pack of beer, was $575 a month, utilities and maid service included.

"Did Miss Hopkins pay rent promptly?"

"Oh, my yes. By check."

"Well now, did Miss Hopkins live alone?"

"Yes."

"And just how long had she been a tenant?"

"Eighteen months."

"Miss Hopkins seemed to dress well. The closet in the bedroom, Mr. Phillips, seems filled with—"

"Miss Hopkins always was exquisitely attired, yes."

"Did you see Miss Hopkins today?"

"No."

"Is that usual or unusual?"

"I seldom see the tenants unless there is some particular problem, like this."

I used Miss Hopkins' phone and called headquarters, ordered a seal for the apartment, then Ralls and I drove to the Fields Building.

It was fifty-two floors of marble, steel and glass, but all we had to navigate to get into

Fields' private sanctuary on the ground floor was three receptionists and a Miss Barnes—who, it turned out, was the first notch below Miss Hopkins, who was the first notch below P.H. Fields.

Miss Barnes was petite, hospitable, wary but informative. Fields was out of the city. He had been for two days. Miss Hopkins was out of the office. She had been for two days. Miss Hopkins was Mr. Fields personal secretary. Miss Hopkins did not come into the office when Mr. Fields was out of the city. Miss Hopkins, it seemed, held an enviable position. It commanded respect but not, necessarily, friendship. Miss Hopkins did not have close friends. At least not at Fields Investments, Inc.

"How long has Miss Hopkins been with Mr. Fields, Miss Barnes?"

"Eighteen months."

"And two weeks, three days, and eleven hours?" I added.

Miss Barnes pinked. "She came out of nowhere! She moved in over all of us! It wasn't fair."

Miss Barnes suddenly clammed. Then: "I shouldn't have said that." Miss Barnes was flustered.

"When is Fields expected to return?" I asked.

"He has a meeting here at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

"But if I wanted to talk to him now where would I find him?"

"I'm not sure. Philadelphia, I think."

"Who does know for sure? Miss Fields?"

"Well, I suppose—"

"And Miss Hopkins?"

"Well, yes."

"But Miss Hopkins isn't here either. Perhaps she is with Mr. Fields."

Miss Barnes pinked again, shuffled. "Really, Sergeant—"

She looked away, looked back, large brown eyes flapping. "Normally," she said, "Mr. Fields stays at The Towers when he is in Philadelphia."

"Okay. Thank you."

"Sergeant?"

I looked back at her from the door.

"What is it? What's happened?"

"Miss Hopkins is dead."

Driving through the rain, Ralls asked, "Do you smell a closer than normal boss-employee relationship, Woody?"

"Perhaps."

Ralls mused, "She was young, okay, been with Fields only eighteen months, and yet she was top banana among the secs, had a fairly healthy checking account for a single girl, good clothes, and a snazzy apartment—in a Fields building yet. Which she also moved into just eighteen months ago. Yeah, I guess—"

"It's just a thought."

He frowned. "Up at the girl's place, the photograph of the guy in the bedroom, was he familiar to you?"

"No. Was he to you?"

"Yeah, but where have I seen him? In the newspapers? In our files?"

At headquarters, Artie came in from his sketching parlor. He got two cups of instant coffee from the vending machine. The expression on his ebony face was sour.

"Thanks a bunch for this Ed English, fellas. A soul brother he might be, memory he does not have. He's hell on foreheads and chins; we've finally got it boiled down to one each, but in between—man, nothing!"

"Keep at him, Artie. He may have seen a killer."

A girl entered the commune squad room. She was tall, thin, and looked uncertain about where she was. She said her name was Cheryl von Wert and she'd heard about Audry Hopkins on a radio newscast. She was shocked, and she wanted to know what had happened. She and Audry once had shared an apartment. That had been when both were secretaries at Hope Insurance. Then Audry had got this fantastic job with Mr. Fields in the home office downtown and had moved into a new apartment.

"Is Hope Insurance a part of P.H. Fields Investments?"

"Yes, it is."

"And just how had Audry happened to get this fantastic job with Mr. Fields?"

"Well, it just happened. I mean, one day Mr. Fields sent for her. Mr. Fields comes around Hope occasionally. We all know who he is."

"I see. Miss von Wert, your

friend seemed to be living rather high for a secretary."

"Oh? Well, she was Mr. Fields' personal secretary, and the pay was fantastic, of course."

"How fantastic?"

"Oh, I really don't know, but it had to be good."

"Un-huh. Miss von Wert, what can you tell us about Audry's family?"

"She didn't have a family. You see, I met her about three years ago, Sergeant. That was when she came to work at Hope, I was already there. She told me her family had been killed in an automobile crash in Montana. That was where Audry was from, Montana."

"Auto crashes, tough. What kind of a girl was she, Cheryl? What was your impression of Audry?"

"Oh, I liked her! Almost everyone did, I guess."

"The girls down at the home office don't seem to share your opinion."

"Well, they're jealous."

"Who's her boyfriend?"

"Lance Hardy. You've probably heard of him. He plays professional football."

I hadn't, but I glanced at Ralls. He was nodding, the puzzle about the framed photograph in the bedroom apparently solved.

"How close were they?" I asked. "Chance of marriage?"

"Well, I don't know about that. You see, after Audry's last marriage—"

"Go on, Cheryl"

"I don't think I was supposed to tell that, Sergeant, but Audry is dead now, so what can it hurt? She was married once, a long time ago. It was to a boy, really, they both were nineteen at the time, she told me. The marriage didn't last long, a few months. Her husband—his name was Aaron Bell—got sent to prison and Audry divorced him and got her maiden name back. Audry never liked to talk about the marriage."

"And all of this took place out in Montana?"

"Yes, but Aaron is here in the city now, or he was a few months ago. Audry told me. I guess he got out of prison and started looking for her. How he found her here I don't know."

"Bell is here in the city today?"

"Well, I don't know about today. Maybe he left after he found out Audry wasn't going to have anything to do with him."

"ANGRY ex-husband a killer?" Ralls wondered out loud after Cheryl von Wert had been dismissed.

"He's got a record, he's been

printed," I nodded, reaching for the phone. "At least in Montana." I called downstairs and got a lab technician named Stone and asked about fingerprints on a knife.

"Sorry, Sergeant," Stone said. "All we've got is smudges. I'd say at least two people handled the knife."

I called the medical examiner. The autopsy on Audry Hopkins had not been completed. I put the phone together. "Ralls, who the hell could handle a knife that was out of sight under a belted coat?"

"An excited patrol cop?"

"I want Dirker and Brown!"

"I'll go down to Records, see if we have anything on Bell. If we don't we'd better check Montana. I can stick my head in Patrol, tell 'em to get Dirker and Brown up here."

"Pronto."

I phoned Philadelphia and a slick voice at the Towers told me that P.H. Fields had, indeed had a reservation, but that he had cancelled. The slick voice had no idea why. I put the phone together, leafed the phone book. I'd found Lance Hardy's number and started to dial when Ralls reappeared with a well-dressed couple and a teenage boy.

"I think these people want to see you, Woody," he said significantly.

The man and woman looked wealthy and worried; the boy looked clean-cut in a neat suit and long, corn-colored hair, but he was apprehensive. The man took over. They were Mr. and Mrs. Jason Verner and Jason Jr.

"We think you might be looking for our son," said the father, drawing himself taller and putting a reassuring hand on the youth's shoulder. "He was driving our car this afternoon. It is the Lincoln that struck the young woman on Sav—"

"Mr. Verner, we understand the driver was a—"

I cut off the words and stared at the long blonde hair. It had been raining. Ed English could have been wrong.

I listened to the boy's story and asked a few questions. Dirker and Brown came in before I was finished. I waved them aside and then arranged to have the boy released on personal recognizance. Dirker and Brown stood a couple of desks away; Dirker looked the most uncomfortable so I attacked him.

He confessed: "She was layin' there, Sergeant, and I was sorta lookin' her over. She was dead. I knew that by lookin' at her, but she looked—well, kinda funny too. Her coat was

stickin' up funny. So I looked inside and I saw the knife. Without thinkin'—or maybe I thought it'd bring her back to life, I dunno—I grabbed the knife and started to remove it. Then I realized what I was doin' and. . .well, I left it."

Ralls returned from Records. We had a file on Aaron Bell, most of it volunteered. Bell had come in to headquarters after he had found a job in the city. He was employed as a driver-mover by Speed Transfer, a moving van outfit. The remainder of his file had been sent by Montana upon our request. Bell had done seven of a seven to ten on a liquor store holdup. He had been a prison hothead in his early years, then he had settled.

We went in to see how Artie and Ed English were doing. It wasn't good. Artie was giving up on his soul brother.

"You go home and get a good night's sleep, Ed, then drop around in the morning," I said.

"Well, I dunno. If it ain't rainin'."

"The forecast is for more rain."

"I'll tell you what," said Ralls upon Ed English's departure, "we've got a killer who's stuffed with luck. A cop smears his prints and a witness can't remember his face."

"Let's see if we can catch Mr. Hardy at home."

"Good. I've never met a professional football player."

The one we met that night was nervous. He was huge in physical stature, handsome, wore expensive casual clothing, and his dark eyes held a distressed look. The distress gave way to brief wariness upon introduction and he sent a brown dachshund at his feet back to a corner pillow. The eyes became worried.

Hardy prowled the front room of the posh apartment, his steps silent in the thick carpeting as we conversed. He shunned a half-filled highball

glass. He knew about Audry Hopkins' death, he said, because Cheryl von Wert had phoned him with the news. He had been pacing since, not sure of what else to do.

"When was the last time you saw Miss Hopkins, Lance?"

"Last night. We went to a movie."

"Did you see or talk to her today?"

"No. She was coming here tonight." He stopped pacing, shook his head as if he did not believe. "We were going to listen to stereo."

"What kind of car do you drive?"

"I don't own a car. Too inconvenient in the city. I'm out of town about half the time anyway."

"I see. Well, what about today? Were you out of the apartment?"

He stopped and stared. "What is this? Am I suspect? Do you think I killed Audry?"

"Easy, Lance. We're investigating a murder. We have to dig into corners."

It didn't satisfy him. He remained hot. He snapped, "I had my usual day. I worked out at the gym this morning, slept most of the afternoon. If it hadn't been raining, I would have gone for a long walk after my nap, jogged a little, but today I remained inside. This is the off-season for me, Sergeant, but I keep in shape. I'm due to report to training camp the last week in June."

"Okay. Audry had an ex-husband, Lance. We understand he is in the city now."

"I wouldn't know about that."

"You didn't know she once was married?"

"Yeah, yeah, I know about that. But I don't know about an ex being in town. If he is, so?"

"Maybe the guy has been giving Audry a bad time."

"Could be."

"Were you and Audry planning to marry?"

"Maybe. Someday."

"Cool it, will you? We're trying to get a line on the girl. Someone killed her and, obviously, the guy isn't going to walk stupidly into headquarters and—"

"Okay, okay. She was a good kid. I liked her. She stood on her own feet. She took care of Audry. Nobody had to do it for her. But how come you think it was a man who killed her? Maybe it was another dame. Audry wasn't liked where she worked."

"Well, for one thing, we've got a witness who—"

"A witness?" He went to the highball glass suddenly, drank.

"Not much of a witness, really. He saw Audry get out of

a car over at that park near her place, but he can't remember the make of the car and he's having trouble describing the man who sat at the steering wheel. Audry died just a few minutes later. The best we can piece it together so far is she probably had the knife in her chest when she got out of that car. And it was under her coat, which was buttoned and belted. Which, in turn, has to mean that somewhere along the line, maybe while she was sitting in the car, she had her coat open and she was stabbed. Still, she got out of the car, buttoned up and walked away. Sounds weird, doesn't it?"

He had cooled. The dachshund moved to him. Hardy sat scratching the dog's neck. "I can't help you. Last night she said she intended to spend today at her place. She was a secretary for P.H. Fields. You've heard of him? Well, Fields is out of town so Audry didn't have to go into the office today."

"Do you know Mr. Fields, Lance?" Ralls put in.

Hardy nodded. "When I see him, yeah."

Ralls grunted and waved the questioning back to me. I was puzzled, but I stood. "Okay, Lance, we may be around again in the next day or two. It'll depend on what we turn up. In the meantime, if you think of anything that might help—"

"I'll call," he said, and nodded.

OUTSIDE THE apartment, I said, "Give."

"You should keep up with sports," Ralls said. "Fields owns our city's professional football team."

"Another tie," I said thoughtfully. "I called the Towers in Philadelphia. Fields had a reservation but he cancelled."

"Let's swing around by the newspaper. Fields should be in the morgue."

A night editor was cooperative. He opened the morgue and brought out a large folder. The folder included a mixture of clippings and glossy photographs. Fields was forty-eight and looked thirty-five. We spent an hour reading the clips. Most of the stuff was about Fields' business ventures, travels. There was one profile piece. His wife was an invalid, confined to a wheelchair, bad heart.

I used a newspaper telephone. A domestic at the Fields' residence assured me Fields was in Philadelphia. The domestic was not allowed to say where his employer was staying.

"So let's sleep on it, Woody," Ralls said. "FIelds

won't disappear forever. He has too many irons burning."

I asked the editor for glossy photographs of Fields and Lance Hardy. He produced both. He was instinctively curious, but he remained cooperative. He agreed to sit on the investigation until given a solid story.

It continued to drizzle the next morning. Ed English walked into headquarters around nine o'clock and went into a new huddle with Artie. I showed English the two glossy photos I had obtained from the newspaper morgue. He frowned heavily over each. Finally he looked up.

"I dunno," he said, "it might be either one of these guys."

I weathered Artie's look and went into the squad room and called the medical examiner. Audry Hopkins had suffered body fractures and a head wound when struck by the Lincoln, but death had been caused by the knife in her chest.

"One of those tricky wounds, Sergeant," the examiner said. "She could have been ambulatory for two minutes or a week after the attack. She probably was in shock, moving reflexively."

I put the phone together and stared at nothing. Audry Hopkins could have been almost anywhere in the city when she was stabbed.

The phone jangled under my palm. I swept it up. It was Traffic. "Hey, we just got a call from out in the suburbs. Hilton. They found an abandoned car parked in a high school football parking lot. The car is registered to Audry Catherine Hopkins. Isn't that the girl—"

"Have they hauled it in?" I asked.

"They say not. They want to know what we want to do with it."

"Leave it. Don't touch it."

We took a fingerprint team and Ed English with us to Hilton. The car was a 1971 brown Mustang with a windshield crack down low on the passenger side.

"Squatty and a sporty kind?" Ralls asked Ed English.

His brown face glowed. He nodded. "That's the car I seen her get out of."

Ralls tossed him a bone: "That girl you saw driving the Lincoln yesterday turned out to be a boy."

English frowned. "Yeah?"

"With long blonde hair. Are you positive about the Mustang? Maybe the car you saw was an exact duplicate of this one."

"Nope." Ed English suddenly was triumphant. "You see that crack in the corner of the

windshield? It was there yesterday."

So maybe Ed English would eventually remember the face of the Mustang driver too.

I examined the interior of the Mustang minutely. No blood spots. I turned the fingerprint team loose. They worked deliverately and came up with another irritating find. There were plenty of prints inside and outside the car but the steering wheel and door on the driver's side had been wiped clean.

"Okay. Haul it in and have it cleaned thoroughly," I said. "I want to see everything that comes out of it."

We returned Ed English to Artie, and then I pondered, "Where did the stabbing occur, Ralls? No blood stains in her apartment or car."

"That apartment was spotless, that's for sure," he agreed.

"Too spotless?"

He frowned.

"Something about the apartment bothers me. I'm not sure what. On the other hand, I can't believe someone stabbed the girl, stopped to clean bloodstains, and then escorted her downstairs to her car. You know, as if they were going shopping."

"Let's check out Bell."

We drove out to Speed Transfer. Aaron Bell wasn't working: he'd been off the job for twelve days with a broken ankle.

Bell lived alone in a cheap flat. The place was tidy, and he was a bulky, neat young man with his left ankle in a cast and propped on a footstool. He knew about his ex-wife's death and he'd been waiting for the police to get around to him. It just figured they'd get to him eventually—besides, one of his pals down at Speed Transfer had phoned.

So how about leveling with the cops?

Why not? He had nothing to hide. He and Audry had gone to high school together out in Montana, married. They'd been young, nineteen, and the marriage had been great for a couple of months, then things had started to go sour. He'd been working odd jobs, nothing steady; he couldn't seem to find steady work. And Audry had started going fancy on him. She didn't like living poor. So he had hit this liquor store. The only trouble was, the old geezer behind the counter had pulled a gun and wounded him.

Audry had divorced him while he was in prison, disappeared. But he had managed to trace her—and what a surprise she had been when he finally caught up with her. She was out of his league, living

high on the sheep's flank, and she wanted nothing to do with him.

He hadn't left town because he'd spotted this want ad in a newspaper. Speed Transfer was looking for driver-movers. He could wheel, he had a strong back, and Speed Transfer was a good outfit. Even though he'd been laid up twelve days now, the pay checks came in.

Yesterday afternoon? He'd been sitting right there in the flat with his ankle propped on the footstool. He was reading again these days. He'd learned to read a lot while in a prison cell. Had he gone out of the flat? Yeah, 'round five o'clock he'd hobbled down to Bert's—that's on the corner, end of the block—and had a couple of beers. He had returned to the flat alone around seven-thirty, watched television the rest of the night. He didn't know who had killed Audry. All he knew was, he hadn't.

Back at headquarters, Ralls dug a photo of Aaron Bell out of our file and flashed it on Ed English. English turned on another deep frown. "I dunno. Maybe—"

Ralls and I attempted to put it all together then. We had Bell, the ex-con, ex-husband, who still might have a thing inside for Audry Hopkins, in spite of her being out of his so-called league. Bell could have hobbled over to her place, killed her. Why? Because she refused to have anything to do with him?

We had Lance Hardy, who also had been free to go to her place instead of napping as he had claimed. But why would Hardy kill her? He supposedly was thinking about marrying her.

We had P.H. Fields. Where was he? In town or out of town? Perhaps he was in hiding. With his money, he could be in London. It might be interesting to know his true relationship with Audry Hopkins. After all, Audry had been a pretty girl, and Mrs. Fields was an invalid. I decided I wanted to know just where the hell P.H. Fields was hanging his hat. I called the Philadelphia police and asked them to tour the hotels and motels.

We had Oscar Phillips, an apartment building manager who might be a man of secret desire, a man who said he had been out of the building most of the day—and a man we had not shown to Ed English.

Or we had anyone who might have stopped at Audry Hopkins' door, an acquaintance we did not yet know about, a stranger, a salesman.

"Doggone it, Woody," Ralls

burst, "this is the damndest case—"

"That's it!"

Ralls stared.

"Fancy apartment!" I said. "Immaculate! But it has a dog bowl!"

Ralls didn't flinch a muscle. He just stared at me.

"Where was the dog when we were up there?"

I called Oscar Phillips and asked, "Have you seen Audry Hopkins' dog?"

"Miss Hopkins did not own a dog, Sergeant."

"There was a dog bowl in her kitchen."

"Oh. Well, she probably kept it because Mr. Hardy usually brought his dog along when he visited Miss Hopkins."

I called downstairs to the lab. Had the brown '71 Mustang been cleaned? It had. Were dog hairs found? Yeah, some, mostly in the rear seat.

We went into Artie's sanctuary. He was at his sketching pad, looking dour. Ed English sat with his brown head cocked, his eyes tired.

"Ed," I said, "was there a dog in the Mustang when Audry Hopkins got—"

"Hey, a dog!" He suddenly was alert. "Yes, sir! In the back seat, paws up on the front seat, he was stretched way out, one of them. . .I dunno whatcha call 'em."

WE WERE back in Lane Hardy's posh apartment. "Okay, Lance, why did you kill her?"

He stared without seeing, spoke as if in a trance.

"Money," he mumbled. "She wouldn't give me any more."

We waited patiently.

"I gamble. I'm up to my ears in debt. I owe the boys big money, but Audry said no more money. And then she threatened me. She said she was going to write a letter to the commissioner. That would wipe out my football income."

"Lance, where would a secretary get the kind of money I assume you're talking about?"

He pulled at his lower lip, hung his head. "From Fields. She's been blackmailing him for several months. The usual. She and Fields somewhere, sometime. She had photographs. I don't know how she got them, but I saw them once. I was up at her place, she was showering. I was prowling and I found them hidden in a drawer. She never admitted anything to me, but I asked her for a loan, and she came through. I guess she figured it was worth me not going to the police although I never threatened her, Sergeant. I never did. Honest."

"But yesterday she cut you off."

He nodded, acting as if he was at a funeral. "She told me to vanish. She never wanted to see me again."

"And you stabbed her."

"It happened so fast I still can't remember doing it. I blew up. I went to her place to talk to her, beg if necessary. But she wouldn't have anything to do with me. And then all of a sudden she was standing there looking sort of surprised and my knife was sticking in her and I could see the blood beginning to soak her clothing. I didn't even remember taking the knife from my pocket. I still don't."

I pressed gently, "Go on, Lance."

"Well, I had to get her to a clinic, a hospital, you know? I couldn't understand why she still was standing, with a knife in her, but she was. I got her coat and car keys and took her down to her car. We were on the way to the hospital when she just got out of the car at that traffic light. I don't know why. She hadn't said a word from the moment I stabbed her. She just got out of the car and walked away. I couldn't believe it."

"And you let her go, then decided to ditch her car."

He said nothing, merely sat limp. The phone rang. I answered it. It was a sergeant downstairs. P.H. Fields was in the building. He wanted to talk to me. We sent Hardy down to be booked.

Fields was a large, dapper man with a full head of hair and a flat body.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I believe you have been looking for me."

"In Philadelphia."

"Yes, well, I had to cancel in Philadelphia. I had to go on to New York. But when I returned to the office this afternoon Miss Barnes said—"

"We wanted to know about a little blackmail.

He debated. His expression did not change as he stared at us. Finally he said, "I'm puzzled, gentlemen."

"Yeah?"

"I don't know anything about a blackmail scheme."

I glanced at Ralls. He was pinching his nose, staring at a window. I said, "Sit down, Mr. Fields."

"I'm sorry, Sergeant," he said. "I do not have the time. I am a very busy man. If you feel you have some pertinent questions to ask me about the death of Miss Hopkins, please ask them. I am on a very tight schedule, but I am cooperating. I have made myself available."

"Blackmail is pertinent," I told him.

"Yes," he agreed, nodding.

"If blackmail exists, or existed."

I thought about it for a long time, staring up at him. He didn't waver, but with each passing second his eyes became more relieved. My silence was enough. He knew we could not prove that Audry Hopkins had been bleeding him. He became impatient. He shuffled. "I'd like to leave, gentlemen."

I said, "Get out of here."

He turned and marched away, shoulders squared, confident, on top of his world, and I was unable to resist the parting shot: "The next time you're in New York, Mr. Fields, give our regards to your girl friend."

He whirled in the entry, suddenly angry, his face pink. But he departed without saying another word.

I looked at Ralls.

"So some victories aren't total," he said philosophically.

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HORROR STORY

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MYSTERIOUS MEYER LANSKY

by DAVID MAZROFF

IN THE ANNALS of America's underworld there have been many men whose names blazed across the front pages of newspapers from coast to coast. They were super criminals, bank robbers like John Dillinger and Willie Sutton, killers like Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll and Machine-Gun Jack McGurn, gang leaders like Al Capone, Lepke Buchalter and Lucky Luciano, who intrigued the minds of legitimate citizens. There was Johnny Torrio, who planned to take over Chicago, and did.

These, and other infamous criminals, were featured sensationally in newspaper and magazine stories. One man, however, one name, seemed to escape identification except for brief fleeting mentions. That man is Meyer Lansky, surely the most brilliant and enterprising of all those who chose the use of the gun as a way of life.

What is even more fascinating in the case of Meyer Lansky is that he is Jewish. In a criminal empire comprised almost entirely of Italians and Sicilians, Lansky's position at the top for more than a quarter

THE TRUE CRIME STORY–
Of the Smartest, Most Deadly of the Mafia!

of a century must stand as an unparalleled exploit in the blood-drenched history of the Mafia, Cosa Nostra, or The Syndicate—call it what you will. The ingeniousness of the man who has controlled mobsters and killers, ethnically alien to him, for so long a time is mute testimony to his skill and intelligence.

He is on the run today, however, fighting desperately to remain in Israel. The dark shadows and ghosts of one-time gang leaders hover near him, men who were slain because they had outlived their usefulness and knew too much. So Lansky lives in fear, a price on his head, the object of a two-way pursuit—by Israel, which is seeking to deport him, and by Mafia gunmen who are waiting for him, eager to rub him out.

Who is Meyer Lansky? Who is this mysterious little man who kept a tight rein on the ruthless, vengeful bosses of the far-flung Mafia Syndicate. By what means was he able to dictate orders to men like Vito Genovese, Lucky Luciano, Joe Adonis, Joe Profaci, Marshall Caifano, Moe Dalitz, Charlie and Rocco Fischetti, cousins of Capone, and all the others?

Meyer Lansky's real name was Maier Suchowljansky. He was born in 1902 in Grodno, Russia, to Max and Yetta on a day in July, neither was quite certain which day. Immigration records list it as July 4. It doesn't really matter.

The Suchowljanskys, like so many poor Russian immigrants, came to America in 1911, in order to escape the pogroms and to find peace and security in the new land whose streets were paved with gold. Along with Maier they brought a younger son and daughter and settled in the Lower East Side ghetto of New York, the melting pot for Italians and Jews.

A short distance north and west was Hell's Kitchen, the Irish ghetto where Owney Madden held sway. The Italian section was the home grounds for Lucky Luciano. It was fated that sooner or later the three, Lansky, Luciano, and Madden, would meet.

When full-grown, Lansky stood five feet four inches and weighed 135 pounds. As a boy in his teens he was spindly-thin but wiry, his deep brown eyes burning with an inner fire and shining with intellect. His teachers at P.S. 165 and P.S. 34 knew him as an intelligent boy who was eager to learn. He made excellent grades and graduated at the top of his class, just as America was preparing to get into World War

I in 1917. He was then entering his fifteenth year.

Lansky found a job as an apprentice tool and die maker. Even though he indicated that he could advance as a skilled mechanic in the field he had no heart for a trade that required work with his hands. Furthermore, the pay was low. There were no unions then to negotiate adequate wage scales and bosses took advantage of the immigrants, adults and children alike.

He remembered that money and worldly goods bought protection for poor Jews in Russia from the Cossacks and corrupt officials of an equally corrupt government. He recalled, too, how some of the poor saved their daughters from being raped by the Cossacks by surrendering whatever valuables they possessed. Money was the power force. He would get money. Important money. Not just one-dollar bills but fifties, hundreds, and thousands.

About this time he came upon a street crap game, watched with interest as silver and bills exchanged hands among the players. He decided to learn the game. He bought a pair of dice in a ten-cent store and played with them after his parents had retired for the night. He rolled the dice hundreds of times and saw that the numbers six, seven, and eight came up more frequently than the other numbers. He asked questions of older boys and men. He learned of the odds against certain points on the dice and the frequency with which they came up.

After he was satisfied that he knew all he had to know he got into a crap game, and won all the money. It was a beginning in gambling that eventually led him to the ownership of some of the plushiest casinos in Las Vegas.

Lansky quit his job and devoted his time to floating crap games in the streets. In his meanderings around the Lower East Side he ran into a good-looking young kid, three years his junior, named Benjamin Siegel, who had built up a little racket for himself by shaking down the store owners along Rivington, Orchard, and Houston Streets. With Siegel was a skinny kid with a runny nose named Moe Sedway.

"My name's Meyer Lansky," Lansky said by way of introduction. "What's yours?"

"Ben Siegel. What's on your mind?"

"I hear you've got a juicy thing going for you around here. You shake down the old merchants and push cart pedlers for five beans a week or else you burn up their wares."

BUGSY SIEGEL

"You heard wrong," Siegel replied testily. "I sell them protection from all the punks that grab stuff off their counters and carts and run. Those that pay off don't get nothing stolen. Those that don't, do. Like that, see? So what business is it of yours?"

Lansky grinned. "Business, Ben. I want to increase yours. You and me. Partners. I got a few very good boys with me. *Stharkers.* Real tough. Besides, sooner or later a cop is gonna get on your tail and throw your can in jail. Juvenile Detention Home. I can square that. I know a few cops."

"Yeah?" Siegel retorted dubiously. "How come? I don't like guys who know cops."

Lansky grinned again. "I run a few floating crap games in the streets. I pay off. They leave my games alone and run the other games off the street. Clout, Ben. You ever hear the word?"

Siegel doubled up his fists. "Clout? Yeah. I clout them punks who come into my territory. With these. Nobody muscles in on me."

"That's not what I mean. Clout. A little strength, friends who can help when you're in trouble or need someone to talk for you. I got a proposition for you. I'll cut you in on my crap games and you cut me in on your thing here. We split even, down the middle. How's that?"

"I don't know. How much you rake in on your crap games?"

Lansky shrugged. "It varies. From fifty to a hundred a week. How much do you collect a week around here?"

"More than a hundred! So why should I split with you and your chicken-feed fifty or maybe a hundred?"

"You don't understand, Ben. I'm going to increase your take around here, and you're going to increase my take in the crap games."

"Yeah? How?"

"I'll sell *all* the store owners

around here the protection. You will control all the crap games the other guys run. I understand you've got a couple of *stharkers* with you."

"A couple hell! I've got five of 'em, and some of 'em are a little tougher than me. And I can use these fists." He looked Lansky over. "You're a little guy. Older. But smaller. How old are you?"

"Eighteen. How old are you?"

"Fifteen. And I can lick you with one hand tied behind my back!"

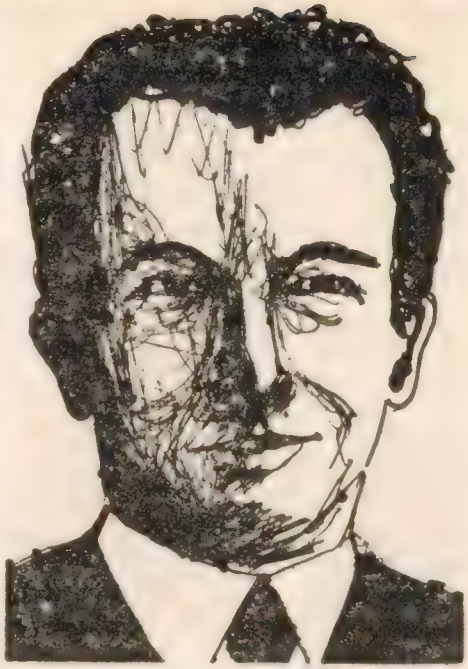
Lansky grinned. "Sure. But I don't fight with my hands. It's too tough on the eyes, ears, and nose. I prefer the easier way."

"Yeah? What's that?"

Lansky tapped his forehead. "Brains, Ben. You can go only so far with muscle. With brains you can go a million miles farther. Let me explain it to you. I'll play it softy with the merchants. I won't sell them protection. That's against the law. I'll sell them insurance. That's legal. If they don't buy our insurance then you have your boys show them how risky it is without it. Understand?"

"Sure. Whattayah think I am, a dummy?"

Siegel wasn't a dummy, by any stretch of the imagination, but he fell for Lansky's



MEYER LANSKY

psychology. The persuader was the statement:

"If they don't buy *our* insurance. . ."

THIS WAS the beginning of one of the most unholy alliances in the history of American criminalty, the beginning of the infamous *Bug and Meyer Mob*, an association that sent Siegel to a violent and untimely death by assassination, and Lansky to wealth beyond his wildest dreams.

Lansky did what he said he would and could do. He sold every merchant in the neighborhood the Siegel-Lansky brand of insurance. There were some

merchants who resisted Lansky's sales pitch but they soon fell in line when Siegel and his boys either tore up their goods or burned them, and before the eyes of hundreds of onlookers in broad daylight.

Briefly, Siegel was a creature of violence, malevolent, hostile, who found pleasure in inflicting pain and death, and usually both at one and the same time. He indicated it even at that early age. When Lansky told him a certain merchant refused to buy their insurance, Siegel went wild.

"I'll burn the bastard's place down around his ears. I'll beat him to a pulp." He turned to Moe Sedway. "Moey, go get the boys!"

"Wait, Moey!" Lansky said. Lansky recalled how the poor had been treated in his native Grodno. There was compassion in his heart for these immigrants who had fled Russia to escape the very same thing that Siegel wanted to visit upon them. He turned to Siegel.

"Ben, I told Officer O'Reilly there would be no beatings, no burnings, that everything would be run peacefully. He's our clout. If my word to him is broken we may lose the whole *schmear*. Play it cool, Ben. Talk to Mr. Gold. Explain it to him, that unless he pays us the five beans a week you won't stop the *goniffs* from robbing him blind. Tell him that right now it's five beans a week. Next week, unless he starts paying off now, it will be ten beans a week. That'll bring him around."

"You think so?" Siegel asked, a thoughtful expression on his face.

"I think so, yes."

"Okay, I'll try it. But he better go along or else I'm gonna do it my way."

"Okay, Ben, but try it this way first."

Siegel tried it Lansky's way. It worked. Everything else worked for them. Lansky paid off to the cops for protection on the insurance racket and the crap games. Siegel, meanwhile, his pockets bulging with money, turned his attention to other satisfying ventures. Women. He roamed the neighborhood like a victorious Roman gladiator and made a play for the prettiest girls in the area.

Handsome as a Greek god and with the sexual appetite of a satyr, he seduced every girl and young woman who caught his eye, many of them young marrieds who found him fascinating despite his tender years. Generous with his money, he plied his conquests with gifts, jewelry, stockings, sweaters, other items of cloth-

ing, and if they pleaded a shortage of money for rent or food he would drop ten, fifteen, or twenty dollars into their hands, pat them on the back, and say, "Anything you need, you come to Ben. Okay?"

"Sure, Ben," the grateful girl would say. Then, "And anything you need, you come to me."

"Sure, Baby, I'll be around again."

On several occasions he tried to fix Lansky up with one of the girls but Lansky turned him down. "No time now for girls, Ben. More important things. I want to move my family out of this dirty ghetto. We were poor in Russia, lived in a small house, went hungry many times. No more."

"Sure, Meyer. When you think you want some of that stuff you just let me know. All I gotta do is snap my fingers and say to take care of my friend Meyer and the girl will fall over like she was pushed. Any time at all, Meyer."

"Okay, Ben, I'll remember it."

That was the difference between the two even then. Lansky was all business. Siegel took time from business to enjoy his natural desires. When he eventually opened the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas, the first of the plush hotel-casinos, he brought with him three of the most dazzling women in America and ensconced them in three separate suites in the Flamingo. That was Siegel. A movie star, a member of the aristocracy, and the "Barefoot Contessa from Bessemer, Alabama."

AL CAPONE

In later years, when Lansky made his many visits to Las Vegas, he could have had his pick of any of the hundreds of tall, leggy beauties in the various shows, girls many men would have given their souls to possess, but not once was he ever seen in the company of a girl or known to have one visit him in his hotel suite. Was he a

devoted and faithful husband? Careful? Or was he aware that playing around with the chorus cuties would in some way react against him as a man who occupied an important position in the hierarchy of the national structure of the Mafia?

There was the incident involving an exciting and beautiful belly dancer who worked for Beldon Katelman in the El Rancho and was his favorite. She had won the attentions of Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, Ricky Nelson, as well as other movie stars and high rollers. Several of the boys made bets for and against her that she could or could not seduce Lansky. They sent her to his suite on a pretext. She tried every trick she knew, and she knew them all but she came back a loser.

"The guy ain't human," Dave Berman, a big investor in the casinos, said. "How the hell could he turn down Sheika?"

"Pay off, Dave," Gus Greenbaum said. "I told you he wasn't that kind of guy. He doesn't mix business with pleasure."

"My god!" He turned to the dancer. "What happened?"

"What happened?" she repeated in a puzzled tone. "How should I know? I threw everything at him, and I mean everything! He looked at me as if I were something that had escaped from a looney house and said, 'If you don't put your clothes on you're going to catch pneumonia. I should hate to be responsible for that."

"I said, 'Mr. Lansky, I made a bet that you wouldn't turn me away. Please don't.' Then he said, 'How much did you bet?' I said, 'A hundred.' He offered me the hundred and I turned it down. I told him I paid my own bets. Do you think I'm nuts or is he?"

Dave Berman shook his head. "I don't know. Maybe both of you."

The combination of Siegel and Lansky had to come to the attention of mobsters who were looking for bright young men to take into their organizations. Among them were Owney Madden, who bossed the gang from Hell's Kitchen; Charlie Lucania, who later became known as Charles Luciano and Charlie Lucky, who had a tough gang of young Italians across the dividing line that separated the Jews from Italians; and Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and Jacob "Gurrah" Shapiro, who became the leaders of the infamous Murder, Inc. mob.

Siegel was twenty at the time, and Lansky was twenty-three. They had implemented their crap game and insurance rackets with burglary, robbery,

and extortions on a larger scale. Siegel had also been involved in several shooting affrays and had earned the reputation of a hot-head killer.

Lansky said, "We've got three offers, Ben. Which one do you like? It's up to you. I'll go along with you."

"Why do we have to tie up with anybody? We've got our own gang. We're the bosses. If we tie in with any of the three then they are the bosses. That's not for me. You tell them we'll work with them but not *for* them."

"Okay, Ben, I'll go along with that. Any of the three have any kind of work for us, and we like the setup, we'll do it."

"If the price is right," Siegel replied tersely.

"Naturally. I want to point out something. This guy Luciano is a comer, sharp, cool. He's got a lot of good ideas. He's going to be a big man, and not too far from now."

"So are we, Meyer. We've gone pretty far together. I like it this way."

"I understand. What I was about to say was that of the three, I would go along with Luciano if there should be a break between him and the other two."

"Maybe. I don't trust them bastards. I'd rather go along with Buchalter and Shapiro. At least they're our own kind."

"Buchalter and Shapiro are mixed up a lot in labor unions. They work both sides of the street, the bosses and unions. They're strike breakers and strike makers, wherever the money is. Luciano is in the same rackets we're in."

"Sure. That's what I mean. He might get hungry and want to eat up our business."

"I don't think so. Well, let's leave it the way you suggested for the time being. I'll deliver our proposition."

MEYER LANSKY'S goal was power and money. The way he figured it, one begot the other. He knew that Luciano was plotting a takeover from Joe "The Boss" Masseria, his mentor and godfather, one of the old line Sicilian hoods, a "Mustache Pete" as Luciano referred to him with a derogatory sneer. Lansky knew that Luciano was playing the most dangerous game possible, a double-cross of the man at the top, and yet he felt that Luciano could get away with it because he was a cunning schemer. Lansky rightly feared Masseria.

Joe "The Boss" Masseria didn't get to the top merely on talk or his good looks. Physically, he was a bull with a

face that looked like an underarm pit. He was brutal, vicious, and a conscienceless killer. There was the time he was challenged by Salvatore Mauro, a tough gunman. The two met one day on Eighth Avenue.

Mauro said, "Joe, you done wrong. You grabbed up everything in sight without the okay. The Brotherhood don't like this. I don't like it. I got a proposition. We split the territory. We work together. No trouble for you. No trouble for me."

"Who the goddam hell is the Brotherhood?" Masseria asked, a contemptuous sneer on his face. "I'll tell you who's the Brotherhood." He jabbed a thumb into his chest. "Me! I'm the brotherhood, Sal. But I'm a generous man, see. I'm gonna do something for you. Let's step into this doorway where nobody can see us."

He took hold of Mauro's arm and led him into the doorway, pushed him hard so that Mauro went off-balance and then shot him dead before Mauro could finger his gun.

The next victim was Umberto Valenti, who also challenged Masseria. Valenti met the same fate as Mauro. Masseria killed him in a doorway, a few yards from police headquarters. The killings continued until there was no more opposition and Masseria was undisputed boss.

The one name that kept cropping up during this internecine war that shook up the New York underworld was that of Charlie Luciano. Charlie The Silent. Charlie The Deadly. There was no proof against him. No one could say that he had had a hand in the killings that followed the murders of Mauro and Valenti but those in the know were certain of it. He moved like a ghost in the night, swift and deadly, and then disappeared into the dark shadows of the shielding streets while the victims behind him lay bloodied and dead.

Lansky knew this about Masseri and Luciano. He also knew that Masseria controlled most of the dope racket in the city, a racket that brought in huge profits. Lansky wanted a part of it. He knew also that Masseria had a big slice of the liquor business, and in these days of Prohibition illegal liquor was as big a business as dope. Lansky wanted a part of that too. He had that in mind when he told Siegel that he preferred to tie up with Luciano rather than with Owney Madden or Buchalter and Shapiro.

After talking with Siegel he went to see Luciano.

JOE MASSERIA

LUCKY LUCIANO

The sleek gangster was living in a luxurious apartment on the East Side. He welcomed Lansky with a smile, offered him a drink which Lansky refused.

"This is the real McCoy, Meyer. Right off the boat from Havana. You don't have to be afraid of this stuff."

"I'm sure of it, Charlie, but booze and I don't get along too well. I leave it alone." He sat down in the large armchair Luciano indicated. Luciano sat opposite him. Both men were relaxed, certain they could trust each other.

"I talked with Ben," Lansky said. "He doesn't want to tie in with anybody. He'd rather work independently. If you have a piece of work for him, for us, we'll do it, whatever it is. If—" He paused. "If the price is right. Those are his exact words."

Luciano nodded. "Well, that's fair enough, I guess. It's his privilege. How do you feel about it personally, Meyer?"

"I think I can tell you best by telling you that I told Ben I'd like to tie in with you. That's my answer. However, you understand that Ben and I are partners. I have to go along with him."

"Sure. I also know that Ben is a hothead, flies off the handle too fast. Talks and acts a lot of times before he thinks. He could be trouble for you sooner or later. You're a lot smoother, Meyer. In our business, that's the way it has to be. Now, I'm not telling you to break up with Ben, but what I am saying is that if you come to the point where you think Ben is holding you back, I'll have a place for you with me. Frankly, Meyer, I need someone like you. You've got brains. That's what really counts."

"I appreciate it, Charlie. If Ben and I should split I'll come in with you."

"Good. I want to tell you something. We're making a lot of money. That money can't just lay around. Too dangerous. We've been putting it into legitimate business—laundries, cleaning stores, a whole chain of them, night clubs, packing houses, trucking firms, printing plants, the cloak and suit business, and anything else in which we can make a buck. That's where you'd come in, finding things in which we could invest, set up companies and corporations under hidden names when necessary."

Luciano didn't tell Lansky that the mob's infiltration into the various legitimate enterprises wasn't always done by investment of money. As often it was done with pressure, threats, violence, and with murder. It was to develop into a stranglehold. Hard. Tough. Unyielding. The red smog of gangdom's influence hung over the lives of rich and poor, baker, butcher, milkman, restauranteur, cafe operator, and into the big corporations and amalgamates. Under Luciano it was done crudely. Under Lansky, when he finally took over, it was done with finesse for Lansky was blood brother to Lorenzo de' Medici and Machiavelli's "Splendid Prince", Cesare Borgia.

Lansky called on Buchalter and Shapiro, the masters of Murder, Incorporated and told them substantially the same story he told Luciano. Buchalter, soft-spoken, reflective, said he understood Siegel's attitude. Not so Shapiro.

The hulking killer, hard as tempered steel, speaking in his broken English, said, "Wot's with dis punk? He's a big shot already? Him and his broads. I hear Siegel spends more time with them chippies on Rivington Street than on business. We're giving him a chance to come wid an organization. So he don't wanna. So tell him I said to stay where he is, wid them chippies!"

"Take it easy, Jake," Buchalter said. "He's got a right to do what he wants. That's his privilege. Okay, Meyer. We'll do it like that. If we have some business we want you and Ben to take care of we'll call you."

"We don't need it, Louis," Shapiro said. "Why should we bother wid a punk, huh?"

Lansky said, "Jake, you're taking the wrong attitude. Ben is a good boy. He's not a punk. So he likes the girls. When there's work to be done, he does it. He's good at it, too. Give him a chance. You'll like the way he works."

Shapiro said to Buchalter, "You like it?"

Buchalter shrugged. "Why not? As a matter of fact, Meyer, we have a little business we'd like Ben to take care of for us now. There's a pants maker over on 23rd Street, in a loft. A stubborn man. Our price for protection to him was two hundred a week. Now we want four hundred. Tell Ben to talk some sense to this guy. I'll give you his address. Home and business. Tell Ben to use his own judgment. We don't care how far he goes."

"How much for us, Louis?" Lansky asked. "I have to tell Ben that."

"A grand. We don't want this guy killed, just to be reasonable."

"Okay, Louis. I'm sure Ben will take care of it."

Ben did. Siegel loved nothing better than to convince a stubborn businessman to listen to reason. He had learned the manner and means early. And thus began an unholy alliance with Luciano, Murder, Incorporated, and with Owney Madden. The Bug and Meyer Mob was on its way, and was to become feared by the underworld as the devil was feared by a saint.

Lansky saw to it that proper protection was given Siegel by big payoffs to certain detectives and district attorneys. Lansky took the orders from Luciano and Buchalter and delivered them to Siegel, and Siegel carried them out efficiently. On his own, Lansky worked a great deal with Luciano. He made contacts with the proper people: detectives, district attorneys, lawyers who could fix things, judges, congressmen, and other public officials. He soon earned a reputation for being a man who could get things done without a gun and he was sought out by every top hood in the city for counsel.

IN THE next two years Meyer Lansky was introduced into the inner workings of the mobs. In one conference to allocate liquor supplies and fix prices he sat at the head of the table. Present were Irving Bitz and Salvatore Spitale, New York hoods; Abner "Longy" Zwillman from Newark; Danny Welsh of Providence; Cy Nathanson from Atlantic City; and Charles "King" Solomon from Boston.

The decision arrived at in this conference was conveyed to Frank Costello, Joe Adonis, and Al Capone in Chicago, since Capone had to buy a great deal of his imported liquor from the New York mobs. Rum running boats, the fastest that could be had, brought in liquor from

Cuba, the Bahamas, and other islands.

About this time, Luciano got rid of Joe "The Boss" Masseria in one of gangland's classic double-crosses.

When Masseria heard of the conference he blew his top. "Momma Mia!" he shouted at Luciano. "Micks, Jews, bastards! Lansky, Solomon, Nathanson, Zwillman, Welsh! *Pelandrones! Maiales!* They are not the Brotherhood!" He spat and uttered and oath. "Sicilianos! Only Sicilianos! Why did you allow this, Charlie?"

"I had nothing to say about it, Joe. It was not my doing."

"Then we undo it!" he said in Italian. "With the gun, the knife, the bomb!"

"I'm afraid not. Too big. Too many people. Let me look into it. Right now we're not hurt. We have our own supply lines. We set our own prices."

"Sure, but for how long? These *Mezzanos*, these pimps, will take over unless we stop them. Now!"

"I'll look into it," Luciano answered evenly. Then, "Joe, you're a little upset. I know a new Italian restaurant. Scarpato's. In Coney Island. We'll have a nice dinner, play a little cards. You will feel better then and things will look better too. We go, eh, Joe?"

"Okay, okay. What time?"

"I'll pick you up at seven," Luciano said.

"Okay, Charlie. I'll be ready."

When Luciano left Masseria he called Lansky and asked him to come over immediately. When Lansky arrived, Luciano told him of the setup. "When the restaurant clears, you tell Ben to come in and do the job. If he wants to take other people with him, that'll be okay. Here's five grand. This is confidential. Ben isn't to know this was my order."

"Okay, Charlie. I'll take care of it."

Luciano and Masseria dined leisurely, drank well. And then when the last diner had left, Luciano suggested a game of cards. "We'll relax the dinner, eh, Joe?"

They played cards for about fifteen minutes and then Luciano got up from the table. "I must wash my hands. You will excuse me, yes?"

"Of course, of course."

When Luciano had gone into the men's room, Siegel and Albert Anastasia walked in. They went straight to where Masseria sat and shot him six times in the head.

The cops came quickly, questioned everyone in the place but no one could say exactly what had happened, how many gunmen had done

the killing or what they looked like.

"Where were you, Luciano?" a detective asked.

"I was in the men's room washing my hands. I heard the shots and ran out. All I saw was one man's back." He shrugged. "I can't read backs, not even marked cards." He shook his head sadly. "Joe was like a father to me. I can't understand why anyone would want to knock him off."

The murder became Case. No. 133-31 in the New York Police Department files. A very dead case.

What followed next was a most audacious and systematic extermination of all the Old-Line Italian and Sicilian bosses from coast to coast. Luciano took over. Siegel was sent to Philadelphia to put the boys in line there, and Meyer Lansky moved into Luciano's sphere of operations. He was really on his way.

Lansky immediately called a meeting of all the top men in the gangs, from every part of the country. The conference was to take place at the Hotel President in Atlantic City. Present were Capone, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello; Moe Balitz and Lou Rothkopf from Cleveland; King Solomon from Boston; Nig Rosen and Max "Boo Boo" Hoff from Philadelphia; Johnny Lazia from Kansas City; Abner "Longy" Zwillman from Newark; and Santo Trafficante, Jr. of Tampa, Florida.

Again Lansky sat at the head of the conference table. His reputation as a man deeply versed in money matters was already known by all those present, as was his reputation as an organizer and planner. Lansky outlined an organization format in which there would be a close working arrangement between and among each of the gang leaders at the table.

One of the subjects discussed was the Continental Press Service controlled by James M. Ragen. Continental held a monopoly with bookmakers west of Chicago. Either they used Continental at his fees or none at all. A wire service which brought in the results of races from all over the country was as essential to a bookmaker as water is to a fish.

Capone said, "I want Continental. Ragen is outside of every organization, yet he controls the major wire service in the country. That service belongs to Chicago. We can't buy it so we're going to take it."

Lansky said, "Al, I believe I am expressing the feelings of all present in saying that control of

the wire service should be evenly divided among those here as a gesture of good faith, that you are willing to cooperate according to the formula which has been agreed to so far."

Everyone around the table nodded, pleased with Lansky for having spoken out in their interests, and his stock rose. He had assumed as much when he made the suggestion.

Capone said, "Very well. The wire service will be divided on a cost basis. There isn't a service on the West Coast. There should be one established there."

Lansky said, "That's an excellent idea. I want to propose sending Ben Siegel to Los Angeles. He can work with Jack Dragna in setting up the service there. I have confidence in Ben. I'm certain he'll do the job."

He looked around the table. The men there were in debt to him for having spoken up in their favor and felt they owed him this concession, although some of them felt that Siegel was a little too flighty, too eager with a gun. Lansky asked for a raise of hands. All hands went up.

"The proposal is agreed to then. Very well, gentlemen. I shall take back the facts of this meeting to Luciano and if he agrees we shall follow the format."

There was further discussion between individuals after the meeting was adjourned. The consensus was that Meyer Lansky had handled everything exceedingly well, that he could be trusted, and that he certainly was possessed of a superior intelligence.

Lansky reported to Luciano, outlining everything in detail, and Luciano was pleased. He did say, however, that he was a bit skeptical about Siegel's ability to handle the West Coast.

"Let's give him a chance at it," Lansky said. "If it doesn't work out *we* can always make a change." That plural pronoun never left Lansky's vocabulary.

"Okay, Meyer, I'll go along with it. Set it up."

Lansky's primary reason for wanting Siegel in California was because he wanted to dissolve all association with Siegel in their partnership. With Siegel three thousand miles away, Lansky felt he then could move to his goal on his own momentum, unencumbered by Siegel's idiosyncrasies.

Siegel had earned the nickname of *Bugsy* because of his way of disposing of his victims. He would torture them unmercifully before killing them. Then, too, he would blow up at

the slightest provocation. One never knew when his demoniac temper would explode and result in a killing.

Siegel went to the West Coast and set up the Trans-American wire service all along the California coast, but not before he had killed Les Brunemann, a Redondo Beach gambler and bookie, who had refused to come into the setup Siegel outlined, as well as a half dozen other small-time bookies.

Lansky turned his attentions to bigger things, casinos in Cuba and Miami. Fulgencio Batista was in power in Cuba at the time and Lansky took his proposition directly to him, knowing that Batista was a good listener when the color of the conversation was green, like money. Batista listened eagerly and nodded his head in agreement. He nodded automatically and so often that he nodded before Lansky had asked him a question. Lansky handed over an envelope filled with thousand-dollar bills and Batista nodded again.

As a result of all that nodding, Lansky opened up a plush casino in the Hotel Nacional. Batista blessed the successful opening night by his presence. Lansky then turned his attention to Miami and Broward County. Walter Clark was the sheriff, a gentleman

who was easy to get along with and a man who could out-nod Batista. Gambling was wide open in Broward County in no time at all.

Lansky then invested in Tropical Park and Gulfstream Park, two of the most beautiful race tracks in the country. He also invested in hotels and motels, in apartment buildings, restaurants. A great deal of Lansky's money came from narcotics, liquor, shylocking, and murder. Every enterprise vicious, violent, and villainous, corrupting and undermining the structure of a social order.

Things began to happen in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Miami, and other cities where the mobs had interests, and where Lansky had interests. Salvatore Maranzano was killed in New York. King Solomon

was slain in Boston. Luciano was indicted on a long list of charges involving prostitution. Louis "Lepke" Buchalter was indicted for murder.

Everything that happened seemed to increase Lansky's power. He established firmer relations with Syndicates bosses in Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Kansas City, and in the Minneapolis and St. Paul twin cities. In New Orleans he found another Batista in the Governor of Louisiana. Lansky brought along Frank Costello to aid him in convincing the Governor that slot machines were a social virtue.

"It will be for charity," Lansky said. "A certain percentage of the profits will be distributed to various charitable organizations." He put an envelope on the desk containing twenty thousand dollars in thousand dollar bills. "That, Governor, is to help defray expenses. The same amount will be forthcoming every month. You need only to legalize slot machines. We are interested mainly in New Orleans."

"Gentlemen, you need say nothing more. Slot machines will be legalized." He picked up the envelope, took a quick look at the crisp grand notes, riffled them. A broad smile creased his face. "Very soon, gentlemen."

The Governor had slot machines legalized. Lansky and Costello put "Dandy Phil" Kastel in charge of the operation. The first month's take was something around two million dollars. Charity got less than a thousand dollars. The Governor got his regular twenty thousand a month. Lansky, Costello, and Kastel pocketed the rest.

MEYER LANSKY'S next move was to Hot Springs, where Owney Madden, who had gone there for his health and married the postmaster's daughter, was in power. Lansky convinced Madden that he was missing a big bet by not turning the Southern Club there into a rug joint, a high class gambling casino.

"I'm a little short of ready cash," Madden said.

"I'll finance it," Lansky said. "Costello is interested in this too. We'll be equal partners."

"That suits me fine," Madden said.

In New York, Buchalter was convicted and sentenced to death. Luciano was convicted and sentenced to a term of from thirty to forty years. Lansky visited him in jail.

"I'll get you out, Charlie," Lansky told him. "That's a promise. Whatever it takes, I'll get you out."

"I believe you, Meyer,"

Luciano replied. "I'm not worried."

Buchalter was executed. No one raised a finger to help him. The word was out from Lansky. "Lay off!"

Jake "Gurrah" Shapiro was indicted on numerous charges, convicted, and sentenced to a long term in prison.

In Hollywood, Bugsy Siegel was riding high. He hobnobbed with many famous stars, directors, producers, and moguls. Cary Grant, Barbara Hutton, Jack Warner, George Raft, Humphrey Bogart, Clark Gable, and a dozen others. He had taken over all the rackets. He was feared for his hot temper and eagerness to kill as well as for the fact that he was known to have the Mafia organization behind him.

Before Siegel came to Hollywood, the Mafia on the West Coast had run things in a loose and unorganized way. Jack Dragna and Mickey Cohen had things their own way. Neither had any organizational ability. Killings had been promiscuous—forty-one gangland slayings, most of them Sicilians and Italians. Instead of bringing order it brought chaos. Siegel killed two men and the others fell in line. That was edict: "*Get in line or die!*"

Siegel made Dragna and Cohen his lieutenants and then muscled in on everything in sight, despite mild warnings from Lansky to go easy, move slowly.

Siegel cut himself in for a piece of the Aqua Caliente race track, a slice of the offshore gambling ships, the Culver City dog track, and a big interest in the Clover Club, a plush gambling joint on Sunset Boulevard frequented by movie stars. He set up a feedline for narcotics from Mexico into Los Angeles, organized the brothels. He had learned well from the lessons Lansky taught him and paid off to the right detectives, higher police officials, judges, and anyone else who could guarantee protection.

Siegel then made a momentous move. He had nourished a dream for many years of being the gambling king of America. He wanted to build a gambling establishement that would rival Monte Carlo. The place? Las Vegas. The story of Siegel's conquest of Las Vegas was told in a previous issue of this magazine. Suffice it to say that he constructed the Flamingo Hotel and casino, the first of the plush hotel-casinos in Las Vegas. He ran into money problems. The Flamingo Hotel, Siegel's financial problems, and his hot temper were to cost him his life, aided by his one-time pal and partner, Meyer Lansky.

Lansky, on orders from Lucky Luciano, was now the top man of the national structure of organized crime, the Mafia, Cosa Nostra, the Syndicate, or any other name by which it is called.

James Ragen, who owned the Continental Press Service, was murdered in Chicago by the Capone Syndicate, which took over the Service from Ragen's heirs. There was no need now for Siegel's Trans-America wire service and the Capone Syndicate got in touch with Lansky and informed him that he was to tell Siegel to turn Trans-America over to them.

Trans-America was a source of huge income for Siegel. He needed the money he derived from it to finance the completion of the Flamingo Hotel and casino. He balked at Lansky's order.

"Meyer, do you know what the hell you're asking me to do? You're asking me to blow a million dollars of my own money that I've put into the Flamingo plus two million I borrowed from the Fischettis, and another million from personal friends. I can't do it. I can't give up Trans-America!"

"Ben, listen to reason," Lansky said. "This is not my request. It's an order. From the very top, from the Commission. No arguments, Ben. Give it up."

"The hell with you, Meyer! The hell with the Commission and all them other spaghetti benders. Trans-America is mine and I'm keeping it. That's final!"

"You're wrong, Ben. It isn't yours. It never was. You were sent out to the Coast by the Organization to set it up. You were allowed to keep the take from it on Luciano's orders, as a favor to me. Now, I'm asking you to do me a favor, and yourself, and give up Trans-America without any more arguments."

"No! I can't. Not even as a favor to you. That's it."

"I'm sorry you feel that way about it, Ben. I felt you owed me that much."

"You owe me a hell of a lot more, Meyer. I helped put you where you are. I helped make you!"

"We made each other, Ben. One last time. Give up the wire service in Chicago."

"You go to hell!" He slammed the receiver down and left Lansky at the other end shaking his head.

Luciano had been freed from prison, his sentence commuted by Governor Thomas E. Dewey, the same man who, as a special district attorney, had convicted him. He was deported to Italy. He was at the time of Lansky's conversation with Siegel in

Havana to where many of the top men in the Mafia were going for a conference.

Siegel learned of the conference and hopped a plane for Havana to plead with Luciano to let him have Trans-America for another year so he could finance the completion of the Flamingo.

Luciano listened patiently while Siegel pleaded his case.

"I'm sorry, Ben," Luciano said, "but the decision has been made. You have to give up Trans-America."

Siegel argued again. "Lucky, listen to reason. I've got everything I own in the Flamingo. All I need is one more year and I can get out clean. One year, Lucky, that's all I ask."

"I'm sorry, Ben. The answer is no."

Siegel's temper got the best of him. "No, no, no! That's all you can say. You forget a lot of things, Lucky. You forgot I killed for you. I killed Masseria for you. That made you the boss. You don't want to remember that, do you?" Siegel stormed.

"There are a lot of things you don't want to remember, Ben," Luciano replied evenly. "I allowed you to keep all the take from Trans-America for years. That should have been enough to finance the Flamingo. But you need a lot of broads around you, high-priced women. Virginia alone would break a millionaire. No, Ben. No more talk. No more time. Hand over Trans-America to the boys in Chicago. That's it."

"Like hell! You're not going to give me any more orders, not when it's going to break me. You take Trans-America from me and I'll break the organization wide open. You got that!"

Luciano's eyes turned dark. "Okay, Ben. Have it your way. We're through talking."

When Siegel left, Luciano asked Lansky to come up to the suite. "Sit down, Meyer. We have a little problem." He related the details of his meeting with Siegel. "I'm ordering him to be hit. He's just too bad for the organization. If you have any objections, I'd like to hear them."

Lansky thought for a long time. Siegel had outlived his usefulness to him. All he meant from now on was trouble. He said, "No objections, Lucky."

"Okay, Meyer. I'll handle it from here."

On June 20, 1947, Siegel was executed while sitting on a divan in the Moorish mansion at 810 Linden Drive in Beverly Hills, where he lived with Virginia Hill. An expert rifleman fired six slugs through the

window and shattered Siegel's life.

That same night, Moe Sedway and three other men walked into the manager's office of the Flamingo Hotel.

"Move out," Sedway ordered, "we're taking over!"

THE MAFIA saw the potentiality in Las Vegas and made plans for increasing their holdings. Hotels and casinos were built, one after another, the most elaborate in the world that offered the finest in cuisine and the tops in entertainment. Behind each hotel was the guiding hand of Meyer Lansky, and in each of the dozen or so establishments constructed with Mafia money Lansky owned a percentage. To this very day, the licensees of the many casinos list many non-Italians and non-Sicilians, but a look at how much of the actual stock they own reveals that they are no more than front men.

Nowhere does the name of Meyer Lansky appear, yet he was indicted for income tax evasion on evidence that he had skimmed millions of dollars from the profits of several casinos. It was the same thing with his holdings in Miami and Hollywood, Florida.

Lansky was summoned before the Senate Commission investigating organized crime in interstate commerce. The hearing took place in New York City.

Lansky said, after answering perfunctory questions as to his name, age, and place of residence, "May I ask if this is the subpena? I want it known on the record that I was subpenaed."

"Yes," the chairman answered, "this is the subpena. May I ask you, did you bring all these books and records we asked for?"

"No, I did not."

"How about it?"

"I decline, on the ground that it may tend to incriminate me."

"Do you intend to take the Fifth Amendment throughout this entire proceeding, Mr. Lansky?"

"If it will tend to incriminate me, yes."

Rudolph Halley then took over the questioning, asked Lansky his business, and Lansky took the Fifth. Halley said, "Under what law would it tend to incriminate you, Mr. Lansky?"

"Well, gentlemen, I am being investigated for income tax, and I feel anything may lead or tend to incriminate me."

"Who is investigating you for income tax?" Halley asked.

"I guess the Treasury Department."

"Do you know it or suspect it?"

"From all the rumors and evidence that I read in the newspapers."

"Is it your position, Mr. Lansky, that any answers to questions concerning your business would tend to incriminate you?"

"Yes, it would tend to incriminate me."

"I advise you that the mere fact that it might tend to incriminate you is not a sufficient answer. If you said it would—"

"I guess it would."

"Let's go back now. The question was asked, what business you were in. Did you refuse to answer that question?"

"Yes, on the ground that it may tend to incriminate me."

The chairman said, "I order you to answer. Do you refuse to answer?"

"Yes, sir, I decline to answer for the same reason, sir."

"You were ordered," Rudolph Halley said, "pursuant to this subpena, to produce certain books and records, is that right?"

The chairman said, "Before you get to that, Mr. Lansky. Who is your attorney?"

"My lawyer is Mr. Polakoff."

"Is he in New York City?"

"Yes."

"That is Moe Polakoff?"

"Correct."

"Have you advised with your lawyer?"

"Yes, I have."

The chairman, then said, "We, of course, give you an opportunity of having your lawyer here if you so desire."

"I don't think it necessary."

"You do not want to have your lawyer here? I mean, you advised with him and you know what your answers are going to be?"

"That is right."

Rudolph Halley said, "Mr. Lansky, this subpena orders you to produce certain books and records, is that correct?"

"Right."

"Do you have books and records?"

Lansky again took the Fifth Amendment.

Halley said, "I advise you to consult with your attorney then, because the law is that you must produce them. You may refuse, having produced them at the hearing room, to allow the committee to see them; but you must produce them in order to begin to assert your privilege."

"I don't know that, sir."

"Will you consult with your attorney?"

"Yes."

"You are now asked to return, bringing with you the

books and records; and then raising the question, after the books and records are physically before this committee, as to whether you must produce them for inspection."

"I see."

"I will ask the committee to instruct you to return with the books and records."

The chairman said, "The committee now instructs you again to produce the books and records in the morning at 9:30 when the committee meets."

Rudolph Halley then asked Lansky if he knew Frank Costello.

"Yes, I know him."

It was this series of questions that angered the Mafia and eventually wrote finis to Lansky's position as the brains and financial wizard of the Nation Criminal Combine. All he had to do was to refuse to answer, either by taking the Fifth Amendment or remaining mute. But his acquaintanceship or friendship with the many men on whom he was questioned seemed to him to be innocuous. The Syndicate took the position that his admissions tied them in, one with the other, and thus subjected them to investigation. As it turned out, they were right.

Halley asked, "How long have you known Frank Costello?"

"Oh, I don't know. Many years."

"More than ten years?"

"I think so. Yes."

"Do you know Joe Adonis?" (Adonis was later deported on the basis of an investigation that followed.)

"Yes."

"How about Jimmie Alo?"

"Yes."

The list was long. Frank Strader, Charles and Rocco Fischetti, Jack Dragna, Tony Accardo, Phil Kastel, Tony Gizzo, Mike Cappola, and many others.

"Have you had business dealings with any of these people?"

This was the trap into which Lansky fell. Halley had opened up the door to a probable tie-in between Lansky and those with whom he admitted acquaintanceship or friendship and now could pursue it to an incrimination of all the men.

Lansky realized this when Halley asked if he had any business dealings with the list of men he admitted knowing but it was too late to back away from it. He took the Fifth Amendment.

"Who is your accountant today?" Halley asked. "Who does your accounting work?"

"George Goldstein."

"Is that I. George Goldstein? Do Eisen and Eisen, of Florida,

handle some of your many accounts?"

"Yes."

"Does an attorney named Murphy handle any of your accounts and work?"

"I don't know."

"Did you know Bugsy Siegel?"

"Yes."

"Do you know Mickey Cohen?"

"No."

"You do not know Mickey Cohen?"

"No; I don't."

"I believe I asked you if you knew Phil Kastel."

"Yes."

"Do you know Longie Zwillman?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever been in business involving television?"

Lansky took the Fifth again.

"Have you ever been in the gambling business?"

"I refuse to answer on the grounds that it may tend to incriminate me."

"Have you ever been in Saratoga Springs, New York?"

"Lansky again took the Fifth Amendment.

"Even your presence in the city of Saratoga Springs?"

"No; but it may lead, just as I say, through my income tax—"

"How would it affect your income tax whether you had ever been in the city of Saratoga Springs?"

What Halley was leading up to was the operation of the gambling house there which Lansky and Costello controlled. Lansky evaded the question. Halley then asked the chairman to instruct Lansky to answer the question.

The chairman said, "Mr. Lansky, you are instructed to answer these questions. Can we have the understanding that if, in the opinion of the chairman, any question counsel asks you is not a proper question, I will tell you not to answer it? Otherwise, you are instructed to answer every questions that is asked you."

"Yes, sir."

"You understand that?"

"Yes, sir." Lansky saw that he was getting in deeper than he wanted to and should have his lawyer present.

Halley asked, "Did you ever have an interest in the Flamingo Hotel at Las Vegas?"

Lansky took the Fifth Amendment.

"All right then," Halley said, "were you ever in Las Vegas?"

"I decline to answer on—"

"All right," Halley cut in. "Let the record show that Mr. Lansky took the Fifth Amendment. Now, do you know James Lynch?"

"Yes."

"Joseph Stacher?"

"Yes."

Halley named a few more. Gerald Catena, Willie Moretti, Sal Moretti, and Anthony Longano. Lansky admitted knowing them. Halley asked then, "Did you know Al Capone?"

"Maybe. I don't remember."

"Were you ever at the Capone headquarters in Chicago?"

"No."

"Let me refresh your memory, the Lexington Hotel on Michigan Boulevard and 22nd Street, were you ever there?"

"No."

"You don't know? You might have been?"

"I don't know. I decline to answer that question on the ground that it may tend to incriminate me."

"You are fishing for a reason now."

"I am not fishing for any reason."

"The answer is very simple. Were you ever in the Capone headquarters in Chicago?"

"I decline to answer on the—"

"All right, Mr. Lansky, we'll put that into the record. What we are referring to is the Capone headquarters back prior to 1935."

"I refuse to answer."

"Were you ever in the Wofford Hotel in Miami Beach?"

"Yes."

"Were you ever in the Boulevard Hotel at Miami Beach?"

"I don't know. I couldn't say."

"Do you know Abe Allenberg?"

"Yes."

"How long have you known him?"

"Maybe about twelve years or so."

"Were you ever in the Robert Richter Hotel in Miami Beach?"

"I don't think so."

Halley was attempting to tie Lansky in with ownership or part ownership of these hotels. Halley then asked Lansky if he ever were in business with Anthony Guarini, Joseph Stacher, James Lynch, all of them associated in enterprises with the underworld. Lansky took the Fifth Amendment to each question.

"You believe," Halley said, "that the mere answers to those questions would involve you in an income-tax charge?"

"Maybe."

"The answer must be that you think those answers would tend to incriminate you."

"I think it would."

"Do you have any basis for

asserting that answer, except the mere allegation?"

"I don't know how to answer that in legal terms."

"Were you ever on the premises of the Arrowhead Inn, at Saratoga Springs?" This was the gambling palace operated by Meyer Lansky and Frank Costello.

Lansky refused to answer.

"Did you ever hear of the Arrowhead Inn at Saratoga Springs?"

"Sure I did."

"Well, that's something. Thank you. Did you ever hear of the Beverly Club in New Orleans?" Another gambling house operated by Lansky, Costello, and Phil Kastel.

Lansky took the Fifth Amendment again.

"Did you ever see Phil Kastel?"

"Sure, I saw him."

"You know him?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever see him in the Beverly Club?"

Lansky refused to answer the question.

"Were you ever in business with Frank Costello, as a partner in the Arrowhead Inn, the Beverly Club in New Orleans, or in a club in Hot Springs, Arkansas?"

"I decline to answer."

"Do you know Charles Fischetti?"

"I refuse to answer that question."

The committee had amassed a complete file on all of Lansky's business dealings, his ownership or part ownership of the many gambling casinos, hotels, motels, race tracks, and other various enterprises. They were now attempting to gain an admission from Lansky on the facts they had. They had gained some ground but not enough to indict him.

Halley asked, "Have you ever been convicted of any offense?"

"I was convicted for the Prohibition Act, possession."

"When was that?"

"Around 1931 or 1932."

"What else?"

"I was convicted for a gambling offense. That is all I know, unless you have something different."

The chairman said, "You would know whether you have been or not, wouldn't you?"

"I mean, it was so far back. I only remember the Prohibition Act."

"Have you been convicted in the past ten years?"

"I was convicted here recently, last month."

"I mean aside from this thing last month."

"All I remember is possession under the Liquor Act."

"On the basis of your refusal

to answer, there is not much use asking you any further questions. The committee will reconvene at 9:30 in the morning, which will give you a further opportunity of again consulting with your lawyer and having him here, if you want him here. You have been ordered to bring in the record called for in the subpena. Let us give him the subpena back."

THE NEXT morning, October 12, 1950, Lansky returned with Moses Polakoff, his attorney.

The chairman opened the proceedings. "Mr. Lansky, you were on the stand yesterday.

"Yes, sir."

Lansky's attorney said, "Mr. Chairman, I am Moses Polakoff, 475 Fifth Avenue, New York City. The telephone number is Lexington 2-2600."

The chairman said, "I have heard of you. You were in the Luciano case, weren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You were counsel for Luciano?"

"I was."

Senator Tobey then said, "How did you become counsel for such a dirty rat as that? Aren't there some ethics in the legal profession?"

"May I ask who you are, sir?" Polakoff asked, his expression one of anger.

"My name is Senator Tobey. That isn't germane to this hearing but just a question of human interest. There are some men beyond the pale. He is one of them."

"May I answer?"

"Go ahead."

"I don't want to get into any controversy with you about that subject at the present time, but under our Constitution every person is entitled to his day in court—"

"I see."

"Whether he is innocent or not. When the day comes that a person becomes beyond the pale of justice, that means our liberty is done. Minorities and undesirables and persons with bad reputations are more entitled to the protection of the law than are the so-called honorable people. I don't have to apologize to you—"

"I didn't ask you to."

"Or anyone else for whom I represent."

"I took upon you with amazement."

"I look upon you in amazement, a Senator of the United States, for making such a statement."

"Let me say something to you," Senator Tobey retorted. "If I were counsel and that dirty rat came in, I would say, 'You are entitled to representation but you can't get it from

me. I will have no fellowship with you. Get out of my office and find your representation somewhere else."

"That is your privilege, Senator."

"Exactly."

"But it is not your privilege to criticize someone else."

"I didn't criticize. I asked you why you did it. I asked simply for information."

"Because I thought he was entitled to his day in court, and he had his day in court."

"I won't say any more. I reserve my opinion."

The chairman broke in. "Anyway, Mr. Lansky is the witness. Mr. Polakoff is appearing as counsel. Yesterday, we asked Mr. Lansky several questions, many of which he refused to answer. When we left yesterday afternoon we instructed Mr. Lansky to bring the books and records called for in the subpena and also suggested that he consult again with his counsel and invited him, if he wished to do so, to bring his counsel with him this morning. And that is the reason you are here."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Lansky so informed me."

Halley said, "Mr. Lansky, the subpena that was served upon you called for the production of certain books and records, and yesterday you were advised by the committee that it was your duty under the terms of the subpena to produce those books in court, that is, before the committee, and then if you had any questions of constitutional privilege to assert, you might assert them, but the committe is entitled to the physical production of those books before the constitutional privilege can be raised."

Moses Polakoff said, "Mr. Halley, I wasn't sure of my grounds. Personally, I think you are wrong. I think there is a difference between books of an association, a corporation, and books of an individual who is subpenaed and who asserts his constitutional rights. I didn't have a chance to check the cases between ten last night and eight-thirty this morning. I advised him for the present, until I had a chance to recheck the subject, that he do not produce the books, and I would do that most respectfully.

"I would like the opportunity of considering the subject for as reasonable time as the committee sees fit, and at the next meeting I would be perfectly willing to make a more definite opinion as to whether he should produce them or not. If I think he should, he will, and he will then raise his constitutional rights.

But I am of the opinion, based on my general knowledge of the law, but without having made an immediate check, that he need not produce them at this time.

"So there is no desire to be in contempt of the committee. It is just a desire to reserve my client's rights. I respectfully ask that you defer that question until a reasonable time, until your next meeting. I tried to read the recent cases this morning, the one the Supreme Court decided this May entitled '*U.S. v. Bryan* in the 1949 term, and *U.S. v. Fleischman.*' They deal with the very same question, but it didn't cover the subject as an individual. I think under the Wilson case, the old cases, I am right, but I say that with hesitation. I may be wrong."

The chairman said, "The difficulty about the matter is that Mr. Lansky had this subpena for some time. He was ordered by the subpena to bring his books in. He didn't do so yesterday. We continued the matter over until this morning. Our hearing in New York is terminated at three o'clock this afternoon."

"We would be perfectly willing to appear in Washington or any other place."

"Yes, I know," the chairman answered. "On this basis we would never get through. I am sure you appreciate that."

"I do, Senator."

"So we will just have to take the record at the present time that Mr. Lansky continues his refusal to produce the books and records called for."

"Senator," Moses Polakoff said, "I would like the understanding that there is no intent on the part of Mr. Lansky or myself to impede or delay the investigation. I told Mr. Lansky that I was of the opinion that the subpena served upon him was an invalid one, if he wanted to stall for time, I think it was invalid. It called for a time when the committee was not in session and it had an indefinite date. However, I told him to honor the telegram. It came all of a sudden. I thought he would get a few days notice where to appear. We usually leave things to the last minute, unfortunately, in law practice."

"Very well," the chairman replied. "However, Mr. Lansky was also asked a number of questions yesterday about business connections he had. Do you continue to refuse to answer these questions, Mr. Lansky?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"That is my advice," Moses Polakoff said. "Anything associated with his business would incriminate him."

Halley said, "Before we get into that phase of it, I would like to state, Mr. Polakoff, that in my opinion the subpena may well cover, if such books do exist, the books of associations, informal unincorporated associations."

"If such things exist," Moses Polakoff said, "if he had those books, I think you would be entitled to them."

"In the absence of the production of any books," Halley said, "the committee is not going to inquire as to what books he might produce if he were inclined to bring any in court."

"Mr. Halley," Polakoff pointed out, "if you will look at the subpena, you will note that it calls for his personal records and no others."

"His personal records might include the records of certain partnerships and associations," Halley replied.

"I think," Polakoff said, "a partnership would be under the same status as an individual."

"You stated you were unprepared to argue the law."

"I'm not."

"We want to make it perfectly clear then," Halley said, "that your statement excluding, possibly, from your argument, the books of associations and partnerships, you weren't thereby inferentially excluding them from the subpena."

"No. I meant associations such as were investigated by the committee in the Fleischman case."

Lansky saw now how foolish it had been to have appeared before the committee without an attorney in the first place. There were too many technical aspects governing the situation that he knew nothing about. Having decided to forego the protection and defense of an attorney in his initial appearance, he had left himself open to the attacks of experienced lawyers in areas where he was most vulnerable. It had been a stupid mistake, a grave error in judgment.

The chairman said, "Well, Mr. Polakoff, I think we understand one another. On the basis of what has transpired, the subcommittee here, Senator Tobey and I, will recommend to the whole committee that contempt proceedings be instituted against Mr. Lansky."

Polakoff said, "May I suggest, Senator, unless it is urgent on your part, that you withhold that until the next hearing. I would like to look up the law on the question of the books."

The chairman replied, "We would like to give you that opportunity, but, of course, if we ran our inquiry on that kind

of basis we would never be finished. We feel we have given Mr. Lansky a very full opportunity. He has availed himself of it in consulting with his counsel and having his counsel here. So, as matters stand, we will have to take the record as it is. On the basis of this record we have no alternative but to make recommendation. This hearing is closed."

MEYER LANSKY was severely criticized by Vito Genovese, Joe Adonis, the Fischettis, Tony Accardo, and others of the committee members of the National Criminal Combine for his conduct before the Senate Commission. However, because their money was heavily invested in holdings controlled by Lansky, and because they were aware that it was Lansky's financial genius that had made them millions, he was forgiven a great deal for his conduct. But not entirely.

Lansky worked hard to make amends, and the only way he could do it was to further the profits of the Organization by investments. It was at this point that he managed to take control of much of Miami, Miami Beach, Hollywood, and Fort Lauderdale, as well as many of the casinos in Las Vegas.

Despite the number of casinos that Howard Hughes bought in Vegas, the millions that he invested, it did not match by ten per cent the amount the Mafia, through Lansky, invested there.

In Miami Beach Lansky moved with bloodless efficiency to take over the Colonial Inn, situated on busy Collins Avenue, south of Gulfstream Park, a major race track, which Lansky also took over.

Lansky's first move in a takeover of the Colonial Inn, a plush gambling house, was to buy a third interest from Mert Wertheimer, a Detroit gambler and dice manufacturer. Slowly, Lansky forced Wertheimer out of the Colonial Inn. The owners of record, after the ousting of Wertheimer, were Lansky, his brother Jake, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello, Jimmy "Blue Eyes" Also, Frank Erickson, one of the top layoff men in the country. A layoff man is one who takes all sizable wagers on sports events the smaller bookies can't handle. The bookies keep the part of the wager they can handle and lay off the rest to Erickson. The takeover of Gulfstream and the Colonial Inn erased a great deal of the bad taste in the mouths of the Mafia Council for Lansky's conduct before the Crime Commission.

In New York, a special group was set up by Attorney General William Rogers called the Special Group on Organized Crime and was headed by Milton R. Wessel, a brilliant attorney. Wessel had nineteen lawyers on his staff whose average age was thirty, dedicated young men whose job it was to gather evidence against the leaders in the National Crime Cartel, break it up, and send them to prison. High on the list were Meyer Lansky, Joe "Banana" Bonanno, Vito Genovese, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello, Jimmy Alo, and a few lesser lights.

Wessel wanted Lansky first because he felt that Lansky was the moving force in the Mafia's takeover of legitimate enterprises. Lansky's every move was followed. However, the little crime genius outmaneuvered Wessel's Watchdogs at every turn. Persistence and patience kept Wessel's staff on Lansky's trail.

An incident in Miami Beach that ended in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, intensified the Special Group's efforts to get Lansky.

The success of the Colonial Inn inspired John "Big Jack" Letendre, an outsider, to open the Club LaBoheme near Gulfstream Park, a classy gambling establishment that rivaled the Colonial Inn in every way and took a lot of business from it. Lansky decided to do something about the Club LaBoheme and Big Jack Letendre.

Letendre came to Miami from Woonsocket where he owned a great deal of real estate that included the Blackstone Hotel and the Narragansett Race Track. He was also active in politics in his home town, had been police commissioner and been elected to several terms in the state legislature.

Lansky called in two of his men, smooth, tough gunmen. "Take a ride over to the Club LaBoheme and tell Letendre we're his partners. He's too big to be allowed to run independently. "I'll spread the word that we're in. Okay, boys, take care of it."

The two men pushed aside a bodyguard who was standing outside of Letendre's office and went in. Letendre looked up at the two men.

"What the hell do you mean by busting in here like this?"

"Calm down, Jack," the taller of the two men said. "We're here to give you some information, that's all."

"What kind of information?"

"We're your new partners."

Letendre rose from his desk. "You lousy bastards! You think

I can be muscled? Get out of here!"

The two men grinned, then dropped the bomb. "Meyer Lansky, Jack. Your new partner."

"To hell with you, and to hell with Lansky! Now get out!"

"One *last* bit of information, Jack, or better yet, advice. Either we're in or you're out. Okay? Now we go."

Letendre decided to talk with some of his "friends" in the Mafia. He was given no encouragement. "It's a Syndicate deal," he was told. "Sorry, no help. Don't come to me again," Angelo Bruno said, "and I don't want to hear anything at all about you talking to me either, see? That's the way it is."

Letendre decided to appeal to Butsy Morelli, Syndicate boss of Rhode Island. He flew there and was given the brush. "I need your help, Butsy. I was your friend when I was police commissioner."

"Sorry, Jack, this is different. No help."

Several days later, Letendre tried to make a deal with Lansky over the telephone.

"Where are you?" Lansky asked.

"In Woonsocket."

"Stay there."

"Like hell! You're not going to muscle in on me, Lansky. I'm no punk. Don't try it!" He slammed down the receiver.

The next night, a little after midnight, Letendre left the Blackstone Hotel, got into his station wagon and drove home. As he stepped out of the car he was hit by four slugs from two .38 caliber guns. That was Meyer Lansky's answer.

The killing was looked into by Wessel and his Special Group on Organized Crime. All the information they gathered pointed to Lansky. Wessel knew that Lansky still had a contempt charge hanging over his head which somehow seemed to have perished a slow death but was not yet interred. "Hell," he thought, "they'll hand him thirty days and slap his wrist! We need the big one. Income-tax evasion. The rap that broke Capone and took him out of the rackets."

Secret investigations involving many men on the periphery of the Syndicate brought to light skimmings from the Colonial Inn, the Club LaBoheme, and a dozen casinos in Las Vegas, most of the money going to Lansky. A case against him was being slowly and carefully built.

If Wessel and his Special Group knew of Lansky's skimmings then Lansky, through his network of official

informers, knew that Wessel was gathering information against him that would lead to a charge and possible conviction. He began to make large transfers of funds to Swiss banks, using Ida Devine, wife of Irving "Nig" Devine, a Lansky lieutenant, as a courier.

The same information that came to Lansky also came to the members of the Council of the National Crime Syndicate. They now feared that Lansky might make the same mistake in bad judgment if he were called upon to testify in his own behalf in a case involving income-tax evasion as he had made before the Senate Crime Commission. A meeting was called and the decision was that Lansky had to leave the country.

A complicated operation began then to transfer the myriad holdings Lansky controlled back to the rightful owners. Millions of dollars in property, bonds, securities, hotel and motel titles, as well as other enterprises reverted to a dozen different men in the hierarchy of the Mafia. When it was done Lansky was told to leave the country. It was a liberal concession in payment for the operations he had set up and kept going in their behalf. Under any other circumstances he would have been killed.

With charges of income-tax evasion against him, but prior to their being brought against him, he took a plane to Israel. Lansky is now in another battle. He is fighting deportation proceedings from Israel. So far, he has been able to forestall the government's fight to get him out of the country. He has used money, political pressure, every other conceivable means, the same as he used in the United States, to remain in Israel.

At any rate, Meyer Lansky is now seventy years old. For more than a half a century he walked in the dark tunnels of the underworld. He can only emerge into a darker tunnel for on June 6th of this year a federal grand jury in Washington indicted him on charges of conspiring to avoid paying taxes on money allegedly received from gamblers on junkets to the Colony Sporting Club in London. The amount involved was a mere $198,000, peanuts for Meyer Lansky who, according to Justice Department agents, skimmed millions from Vegas casinos.

Gamblers from the United States who played at the Colony Club were given credit and the debts turned over to Meyer Lansky and a reputed associate, Dino Cellini. Collectors of the debts were several

men who were not indicted in the conspiracy, among them Henry Tameleo and Carmine Carlo Mastrotoaro of Worcester, Danny Mongovano of Boston, and Ray Patriarca of Providence. Dino Cellini is now in Rome.

Lansky was also indicted by a grand jury in United States District Court in Miami of conspiring to obstruct the Internal Revenue Service from assessing income taxes. Cellini was also charged with filing two false income tax returns.

All in all, Lansky faces a five year sentence and $10,000 fine for the conspiracy, and a three years sentence and a $5,000 fine on each of the income tax charges.

If Lansky pays for his sins now, in the next year, or two, he will have set a record in the underworld. Nobody lives too long in an atmosphere where a gun is constantly pointed at one's heart, or evades prison by challenging the Justice Department or the IRS, be he angel or devil. Giving Meyer Lansky the best of it in cards and spades, he was no angel.

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By BARRY N. MALZBERG and BILL PRONZINI

I OUGHT TO KILL YOU

Hate was in that room, and Fear. And something hidden and worse—Murder. . .

I WAS MORE than an hour early for work that night, and I decided to stop into this neighborhood bar for a drink to pass the time. It was a place like ten thousand others, deserted except for the bartender and a drunk sitting on one of the leather stools. On weekday nights, when the weather is not so good, nine out of the ten thousand like this one are

equally as empty. But the nine thousand never seem to go out of business. It has to do with cover for other industries, so the owners let them run along.

I ordered my drink and sat there nursing it in the silence. After a time I felt eyes on me, crawling on me, and I turned sideways on my stool. The drunk was looking at me from several seats down. He was a little guy, the kind with no capacity for liquor, and I saw that he was pretty far gone.

I met his eyes, and there was a strangeness in his gaze that made me nervous. I opened my mouth to tell him to keep his looks to himself, but I never got the words out.

The drunk said, very softly, "I ought to kill you."

I just stared at him.

"I been looking at you for a while and I don't like the picture," he said. "All you do is drink. You can't even give me a smile."

"Nothing personal," I said. "I like to mind my own business."

"You deserve to die. There's arrogance coming off you in small waves; I can smell it. You're another one of them out to get me. Murder in the city."

"Not me, friend," I said and put my drink down gently, trying to show the bartender that I was concerned. The bartender was not interested. He shrugged, finally, and then picked up the *Telegraph* and walked all the way down the line to the front, taking himself out of it.

"I'm nothing but a guy on his way to work, unwinding a little."

"Sure you are," the drunk said and closed the gap of seats, putting a hand on my shoulder. "Assassins," he said. "The city is full of assassins, murder, and death. I've seen it in a hundred corridors." He swayed, held tighter to me to keep from falling. "I don't feel any good."

"Sleep it off," I said. The mirror gave back a nice image of the two of us; hanging on to me as he was, it looked like ventriloquist-and-dummy. I tried to push him off. He held on.

"I seen you," he said, "sitting there, leaning over that drink, thinking of how to get me. You've been after me for a long time and now you can be patient. Biding your time, making me sweat, figuring you could get to me anytime you wanted. But I'm too smart for you. I'm on to you. You hold all the cards but I got one thing on my side. I know your moves, I know who you are."

Crazy, I thought. A fruitcake.

"If a lot of guys had listened to me, they would still be here

today," he said. "But no one listens. No one listens."

And he put his hands on my neck and began to strangle me.

In different circumstances I could have been laughing, the whole thing was so foolish; but there was nothing funny about it here and now. He had a weak grip, but he knew where and how to place his fingers. He didn't leave me any choice.

I used a couple of moves to get free and put him on the floor. He lay there, looking even smaller—and like many small guys in repose, somehow wasted. He closed his eyes.

"I lose," he said simply. "But I tried. Take me on the big ride." He drew a breath and put his head to one side, waiting.

A fruitcake, all right. Far, far gone. I put another dollar on the counter and looked at the bartender. He had come down the line and was leaning over the bar.

"He jumped me," I said. "I know you saw that. I had to protect myself. But I want to forget the whole thing."

The bartender watched me uncertainly. So I put still another dollar down.

"Forget the whole thing," I repeated.

"Go ahead and kill me" the little guy whispered, raising a knee defensively.

WHEN YOU HELP
. . . WE CAN HELP
LIFE SAVING SERVICE
AT THE LAKE
EMERGENCY FIRST AID
AMERICAN RED CROSS
ON THE HIGHWAY
IN THE
HOSPITALS
AT HOME
FIRST AID
IN EVERY PART OF TOWN
Red Cross Services include:
Instruction in Water Safety, First Aid and Home Nursing.
Maintaining First Aid stations and mobile units.
Supplying trained volunteers for hospitals.
Aid to disaster victims
Service to members of the Armed Forces and veterans
Preparing youth for responsible adulthood

"I'm glad you feel that way," the bartender said to me, relaxing. "He's just a neighborhood guy, you know, a little

odd, but harmless. I never saw him get violent before."

"Yeah." I started out of there.

"You forgot to kill me," the little guy said.

I didn't say anything; there was nothing to say. I went out to my car and sat there for awhile, thinking about the drunk and how they ought to lock him up somewhwere, in spite of what the bartender said, before he really hurt someone. But it wasn't up to me. Even in other circumstances, it wouldn't have been up to me.

At eleven o'clock I started the car and drove up three avenues and over two blocks, and parked outside the entrance to Novello's Produce Mart. Novello, a regimented man, came out at ten-thirty as he did every night.

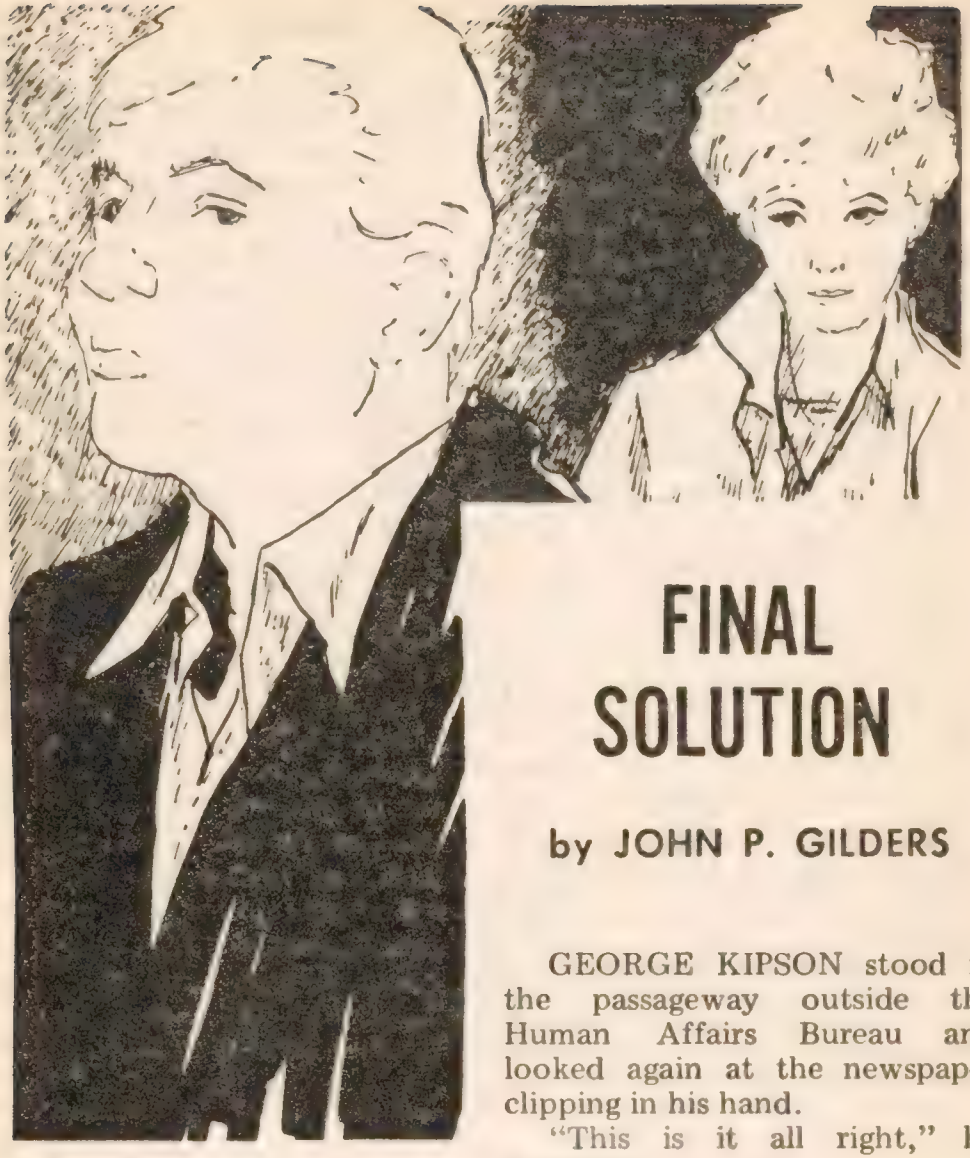
I had the silenced revolver on my lap and the door window rolled down when he appeared, and I let him take four steps away from the entrance before I raised the gun and fired. One bullet was enough. Novello took it through the forehead and toppled over backward and lay still on the damp pavement.

The car engine was running, and I slipped it into gear and drove away from there. A clean hit, like all of my contracts. Scarpatti would be pleased, and maybe there would be a bonus.

As I drove back across town, I thought about stopping somewhere for another bourbon; I felt I deserved one for a job well done. But then I thought about the little drunk, and I decided against it. The damned town was full of loonies like that, and the last thing I wanted was an encounter with another fruitcake. You never know what one of them will do, and they're not all like the little guy. Some of them are strong, really dangerous. Psychopathic.

And there's nobody worse than a psychopathic loony.

ANOTHER NEW MIKE SHAYNE CAPER NEXT MONTH



FINAL SOLUTION

by JOHN P. GILDERS

The price of an unfaithful wife? It can be high—as high as instant sudden death...

GEORGE KIPSON stood in the passageway outside the Human Affairs Bureau and looked again at the newspaper clipping in his hand.

"This is it all right," he muttered.

Kipson was exceedingly well dressed, in his early thirties, and had a handsome, intelligent face.

He was on the forty-ninth floor of the Park Regis building. He felt nervous. Maybe this advertisement did not mean exactly what it said. Maybe he

was reading it wrong. He looked at it again.

Have you a deep, personal problem? If so, then the Human Affairs Bureau can help you. No problem too big or too small. The more personal it is, the better we like it. Our team of specialists offer you 100% security and guarantee results.

George Kipson grimaced. He had a problem, that was for sure. He braced himself, walked into the office.

A receptionist looked up from behind a switchboard. "Have you an appointment, sir?"

"No," Kipson replied. He fiddled with the newspaper cutting.

"Please take a seat, sir."

"Thanks," Kipson said.

He sat down on a low divan and looked around the office. Everything was modern and new. There were some trade magazines on the low table. Kipson flicked through them, noting that they dealt with psychiatric problems, crime and punishment.

"Mr. Rukor will see you now."

Kipson got to his feet and walked into the adjoining office. Rukor got up from behind a huge desk, leaned over and shook his hand.

Rukor was about fifty years of age, of medium build, bald on top with a gray fringe and wore horn-rimmed glasses. His face was thin, intelligent. His eyes were pale blue.

"What can we do to help you Mr.—?"

"Kipson," George added.

Rukor leaned back in his swivel chair and gazed at Kipson. His long fingers played with a ball point pen.

"I have a serious personal problem," Kipson said.

"Yes," Rukor nodded encouragingly.

"My wife is unfaithful. She has a lover."

Kipson flushed. It sounded crude, blurting it out like that. He looked down at the glass topped desk, embarrassed.

"Yes, Mr. Kipson?"

"I wouldn't bother coming to you about a thing like this, but, you see, there are complications."

"Yes?"

"Yes. My wife is very wealthy. Her father had a very successful business. On his death she inherited over three million dollars."

"Hmm," Rukor said, interested.

"So the last thing I want is a divorce. All the money is in her name."

"Yes," Rukor agreed, nodding.

George Kipson looked straight into Rukor's pale blue eyes. "My wife's lover is Walter Sinclair. He is well known in society circles.

He has an apartment just below our penthouse in Berkley Towers."

Rukor said, "I've heard of Mr. Sinclair. Owns race horses, doesn't he?"

"Yes," Kipson said. He was silent for a few seconds, twisted his gold watch band. He lit a cigarette, frowned. He had doubts now. Maybe he had come to the wrong place. He brushed ash from his expensive gray suit.

"You see, I don't want any trouble at all," he said. "I can't afford trouble. My wife gives me a handsome allowance and I don't want anything to interfere with my way of life. In other words, I want to quietly get rid of Walter Sinclair. Can you help me?"

Rukor's pale blue eyes glittered. Then he smiled.

"Of course, Mr. Kipson. That's what we are here for. Yours is quite a simple, straight-forward case."

He leaned forward, tapped the desk. "Our fees are necessarily high, Mr. Kipson, as we deal in highly confidential matters. Perhaps you would like to look at our rate card?"

Rukor opened a desk drawer, flicked a card across the table. Kipson picked it up, examined it. He read it twice.

Counter Matrimonial Adjustment $1,000
Judicial Action $3,000
Coercive Proceedings ... $5,000
Critical Exclusion $7,000
Final Solution ..... $28,000.

George Kipson stared at the card, a puzzled look on his face. He read the card again.

"What does it mean?" he said, frowning. "Counter matrimonial adjustment?"

Rukor smiled, showing even white teeth.

"It means exactly what it says, Mr. Kipson. We adjust your matrimonial relationship with your wife."

"How?"

Rukor smiled again. "There is a standard technique in cases of this kind. We feed your rival drugs which takes away his sex drive. We have ways and means of doing this without him being aware of what is happening. Soon the lady in the case is disappointed and frustrated. Frustration turns to suspicion. After a couple of months the affair is usually ended."

George Kipson blinked. He had never heard anything like this before. He looked at Rukor with new respect.

"One thousand dollars?" he queried.

"Yes Mr. Kipson. Your check would be appreciated immediately."

"Okay," Kipson said excitedly. He wrote out a check and handed it to Rukor. He walked out of the office, grinning.

GEORGE KIPSON sat in the living room of the penthouse and read the evening paper. It was a month later. He watched Nancy from the corner of his eye.

She kept looking at the electric clock on the wall. She was dressed for the evening in an expensive blue gown which accented her figure. Her hair was specially set, and her milk white shoulders gave added sex appeal. She was an attractive woman in her late twenties.

"Walter was supposed to come up tonight," she said.

"He's probably too busy," George Kipson said gruffly. Walter had got used to walking in and out of the penthouse as if it was his own. Kipson hated him for it.

"There's something wrong with Walter lately," Nancy said.

"Yeah?" he queried. He sat up, attentive.

"Yes. He's having trouble at the office, and the staff are worried about him. He keeps falling asleep, can't concentrate on things."

"Huh!" George Kipson grunted. He grinned inwardly. Rukor's drugs were working.

"He hardly comes near us any more."

"Yeah," he agreed. He lowered his head so that Nancy could not see the suppressed triumph in his face.

"I'm worried about him, George. After all, he is our dearest friend."

"Yeah," Kipson growled. Dearest friend! Hell!

"I'm going to tell Dr. Wilson about him. There's something wrong, George."

"You do that," Kipson said grimly.

The next day Dr. Wilson came up to the penthouse. He was an old friend of Nancy's family. Nancy ushered him into the living room.

"Hullo Nancy," Dr. Wilson said. "I spoke to Walter but he says he doesn't need me. I can't get him to say anything. I think he is hiding something. It must be something personal."

George Kipson grinned. It was something personal all right. He had lost his virility. He can't have sex with my wife!

"Nancy," Dr. Wilson said. "You are the only one who can help Walter. I think he's run down. He's probably not eating properly. Invite him to dinner more often."

George Kipson scowled. This was the last thing he wanted.

"He's probably drinking too much," Kipson said harshly.

"He doesn't drink," Dr. Wilson said. "As a matter of fact a little alcohol might be the very best thing for him. He needs a stimulant."

"Yes," Nancy agreed. "Leave it to me, doctor. I'll get him up

here more often. Don't worry. I'll look after him."

From then on Walter was in the penthouse night and day. Nancy fussed over him like a mother. She got him to take vitamin pills, all kinds of stimulants. Walter improved considerably.

George Kipson writhed with bitterness. After three weeks of this he went to see Rukor again.

"What does "Judicial Action" mean?" Kipson asked. He sat facing Rukor across the desk. He held the rate card in his hand.

Rukor smiled. His pale blue eyes examined Kipson carefully.

"As the drugs have not had the desired effect, there is no doubt step two is called for. This simply means that the man in the case is put into an embarrassing situation. So embarrassing that his lover will undoubtedly leave him."

"How?" George Kipson jerked out.

"Well," Rukor smiled. "We will stop giving Mr. Walter Sinclair repressive drugs. In fact, we will reverse the process. We will feed him sex stimulants until he is quite frustrated. You send your wife away for a vacation and we will provide Mr. Sinclair with alternative entertainment.

"We will photograph Mr. Sinclair in the act of love and accidentally channel the evidence into your wife's hands. She will

be furious. It will be the end of the affair."

"Yeah," Kipson breathed. He looked at Rukor admiringly. "And you can arrange all this?"

"The Human Affairs Bureau can arrange anything. We pride ourselves on our thoroughness."

George Kipson nodded. He looked at the rate card again.

"Three thousand dollars?" he queried.

"Three thousand dollars," Rukor said firmly. "Your immediate check, if you please."

Kipson wrote out the check with a flourish. This would fix Walter Sinclair for all time. If there was one thing Nancy couldn't stand it was a man being unfaithful.

"A strange thing happened

today," Nancy said as she walked into the penthouse. She was carrying a small case and a large envelope. She had just returned home after a week with her mother.

"What's that dear?" George Kipson asked. He kissed her gently on the cheek.

"Just as I was entering the building a girl rushed up to me and asked me if I knew Mr. Walter Sinclair. When I told her I did, she thrust this envelope into my hands and asked me to give it to him."

Kipson grinned. He looked at the envelope. It was of plain brown paper and was addressed to Berkley Towers. He felt it, bending it slightly. There was no doubt about it. These were the photographs Rukor had promised.

"I wonder what's in it?" Kipson said, looking at his wife.

"I don't know," Nancy replied. She took the envelope from him, examined it. "Look! The seal is broken!"

"Yeah," he said. He turned away. "You'd better take it downstairs and slide it under Walter's door." Then, as an afterthought: "Did you say a girl gave it to you? Sounds as if Walter has found himself a lover."

Nancy frowned. She stared at the envelope. Kipson walked out of the room, closing the door quietly behind him. He knew that Nancy could not resist looking into that envelope.

Later, Kipson returned to the penthouse, but Nancy was not there. He waited for her all night but she did not return home.

She was absent all the next day and he got worried. He put through a long distance call to her mother.

"Yes, she's here again," her mother said.

"What's happened?" he asked anxiously.

"She's very upset. I think she needs a rest for a few days. What have you done to her, George?"

"I haven't done anything!" he exclaimed.

"You must have done something. She says she hates all men. They are nothing but animals. She says she is finished with men for all time."

"What?" Kipson cried.

"I wouldn't worry her any more, George. I'll talk to her. Leave it to me."

"Yeah," he muttered.

A week passed and Nancy did not return home. George Kipson called her mother again.

"She won't talk to you, George."

"Why not?"

"I don't know," her mother said. "But it's something to do with that friend of yours, Walter Sinclair. He has called her several times."

"He has, has he?"

"Yes. She's all broken up about something. She's talking about getting a divorce."

"What?" Kipson howled.

"Yes. She says that now for the first time in her life she really understands what love is all about."

"God!" George gritted.

"Anyway your friend Walter Sinclair is trying to calm her. She has half promised to see him next week. He might smooth things over for you, George."

"Yeah," Kipson said bitterly. "I bet he will."

He replaced the 'phone on the pins and fell into a chair. "Women!" he groaned. He thought of three million dollars walking out the door. A great sense of insecurity came over him. There was only one thing to do. See Rukor again.

"A most unusual case," Rukor said, fiddling with his pen. George sat looking at him across the big desk. "I would say your wife is in love with this man. She will eventually forgive him for his indiscretion."

"Yeah," George Kipson said. "That's what I'm afraid of."

"We will have to take step three on the rate card."

"Coercive Proceedings?"

"Yes." Rukor hesitated. "When guile fails, force must be used."

"I don't want to get involved with the police!" George Kipson blurted out, alarmed.

"You will be in the clear, Mr. Kipson. The Bureau will handle everything. It is not serious. All we do is administer a beating to serve as a warning."

"Five thousand dollars?"

"Yes."

"It's a bit much, just for a beating."

"Several beatings, Mr. Kipson."

Rukor frowned, his pale blue eyes brittle. He handed George the pen. "A check for five thousand dollars, if you please."

Reluctantly, Kipson wrote out the check. He handed it to Rukor. "I hope this will be the last of it," he said.

"It should be," Rukor replied, smiling.

GEORGE KIPSON waited for a few days, then 'phoned Nancy's mother.

"How's Nancy?" he asked.

"She's in a terrible state," the old lady replied. "Have you heard about your friend, Walter Sinclair?"

"No."

"He's been beaten up by gangsters three times. Each time they kicked and robbed him."

"Good Lord!" Kipson said.

"Yes. And each time it happened it was just after he left Nancy. Do you think there is any connection?"

"No," he said, and hesitated. "Just coincidence, that's all."

"Walter is afraid to come to the house any more. Nancy spends all her time at his hotel. I told her it is not good for a married woman to spend so much time with a single man, but she won't listen to me. You know what Nancy's like."

"Yeah," Kipson growled. "I know what she's like."

He paced up and down the living room worriedly. Even now Nancy would be with Walter Sinclair. It was an unhealthy situation. She already had the idea of divorce in her mind. Now, with Sinclair every day—

George Kipson shuddered.

He checked his bank statement. He had spent nine thousand dollars with the Human Affairs Bureau. It was too much. He couldn't afford to go on like this. He decided to see Rukor again.

"You are not very successful, Mr. Rukor," he said forcibly. Once again he was in Rukor's office.

Rukor frowned.

"You guarantee results," Kipson said. "But all you've done is force my wife closer to Walter Sinclair. I'm not happy at all."

"I told you once before, Mr. Kipson, that yours is a most unusual case," Rukor said sternly. "We seldom go so far down the rate card. However, as there are three million dollars involved I suggest you take advantage of Item four, Critical Exclusion."

"What the hell is that?" Kipson asked sourly.

"We concentrate on your wife. We arrange a minor car accident. We get her into our own private hospital. There, she is cut off from the world. Our doctor will see that she spends a great many weeks in bed, seeing only you.

"You lavish her with flowers and loving attention. Psychological techniques are used daily impressing on her the benefits of a true and faithful husband. This technique never fails. Walter Sinclair will not know where she is. After she has succumbed to our suggestive treatment you take her away for a long cruise somewhere."

"Good Lord!" George Kipson said, overwhelmed. He stared at Rukor. "There's no doubt about it, you're pretty thorough."

"That's our job," Rukor said primly.

Kipson looked at the rate card. He pursed his lips. "Seven thousand dollars?" he queried.

"Yes," Rukor replied. "Plus the hospital expenses."

"You're a bit tough, aren't you?"

"We have to be in this business."

Kipson pulled out his check

book. He hesitated, thinking deeply. Rukor watched him expectantly. Kipson frowned, wrote out the check. Rukor smiled, got up and shook Kipson's hand.

"This should do the trick, Mr. Kipson. I hope we don't have to see each other again."

George Kipson got out of his car at the entrance to the Peacehaven Private Hospital. He took a large bunch of roses, Nancy's favorite chocolates, and some fruit from the back seat.

Arms full, he pushed his way through the glass swing doors into the foyer. It was 2 p.m., and Rukor was waiting for him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Kipson," Rukor said in his clipped voice.

George Kipson merely nodded.

"Where is she?" he asked.

Rukor looked at him. His pale blue eyes were serious.

"I have to tell you something, Mr. Kipson. All did not go as well as we expected. Our driver hit your wife's car a little too hard. In things like this we cannot always be accurate. Your wife has a severe head injury."

"God!" Kipson cried. "She'll live, won't she?"

"We don't know. She's conscious, but she won't see anybody."

"Hell!" Kipson said. He dropped the flowers, chocolate and fruit onto a table. He glared at Rukor.

"There's something else," Rukor said.

"What?"

"Your wife wants to see a lawyer. It's something to do with her will. She told one of the nurses that she wants to leave all her money to the only man she ever loved. I guess you know who that is, Mr. Kipson."

George Kipson collapsed into a chair and groaned. He looked up at Rukor dully.

"You have failed me," he said bitterly.

Rukor pursed his lips. "The Human Affairs Bureau never fails. We guarantee results."

"What can you do now?" Kipson gritted.

"We can employ the Final Solution."

"What's that?"

"The elimination of Mr. Sinclair."

Kipson stared at Rukor.

"Murder?" he asked harshly.

"Elimination, Mr. Kipson. Before your wife changes her will."

"Good God!"

George Kipson held his forehead in both hands. It had to be murder.

"Okay," he said at last.

"Your check for twenty thousand dollars, please."

"Can't it wait?" Kipson asked worriedly. "After all, you know I will be a very wealthy man."

"We only deal in cash," Rukor said firmly. He stared at Kipson, his pale blue eyes hard. "Your check, please."

George Kipson looked up at him helplessly. He pulled out his check book and wrote out a check for twenty thousand.

George Kipson paced up and down in the living room of the penthouse, his face haggard. Three days had passed and he had not heard from Rukor.

Nancy was in a critical condition, could not see anyone. The doctor said that perhaps in a few more days she could see her lawyer.

Kipson knew that she would change her will in favor of Walter Sinclair. If Nancy died, he would be left penniless. He was certain of that.

It was late Friday night when the door chimes sounded. Kipson jumped to his feet. This must be Rukor, he thought anxiously. Sinclair must be dead. Rukor had come to give him the good news personally.

Kipson opened the door. Rukor stood there, hands thrust deep into the pockets of a heavy overcoat.

"Good evening, Mr. Kipson," he said.

George Kipson nodded. He swallowed nervously.

"Is it done?" he asked, a tremor in his voice.

"No, Mr. Kipson," Rukor said coldly. "Before we take action we pass all checks through the bank first."

George Kipson flinched. His face went pale.

"Yours bounced," Rukor said. "You gave me a rubber check."

"I—I—" Kipson stammered.

Rukor continued, his voice flat: "We were forced to refer to your original source of wealth. Your wife is now well enough to speak. She made good your check and purchased the Final Solution."

Rukor drew a .38 automatic from his coat pocket. Calmly, he fitted a silencer.

George Kipson backed away, wild-eyed, unbelieving. He was still paralyzed with shock when three bullets ripped into his chest.

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Please print NOVEMBER, 1973

BAD TIMING

Wisely and well had they planned their perfect caper. Nothing could go wrong, they said. Nothing? Well, there was. . . .

by
FRANK BURY

JENNY WESTON preened herself before a long mirror in Lady Henty's bedroom, smoothing out the superb Dior gown that fitted her slim figure like a second skin. Joe Purset, sprawled on the bed, watched her with quick dark eyes.

"You look fabulous, Jen," he said. "Just like her ladyship herself. You're too good to be working as her secretary."

She said: "I've got butterflies in the tummy."

"No need to, sweet. I don't attempt jobs with snags."

"Suppose someone was to turn up, Joe?"

Purset snorted: "Who's likely to? You saw Lady Henty off at the station, didn't you? You know she's away for a week. And Sir Mark Henty's still in New York."

"Well, let's hope I carry it off okay."

"You will, love. You look as much the lady as Lady Henty. Bit like her, too. Anyway, this chap coming from Beaucaire's—Ralston—doesn't know her ladyship, does he?"

"He'll know her by name," Jenny said.

"Everyone knows of Sir Mark and Lady Henty."

"He's not likely to know her by sight if she doesn't buy anything from Beaucaire's."

He grinned. "I bet Beau-

caire's were real excited when you phoned 'em about that necklace. Hooking Lady Henty as a customer is quite something. No wonder they're sending Ralston personally."

Jenny frowned. "Suppose he won't let me keep the necklace? Suppose he won't take the check?"

"Why shouldn't he? The Henty credit is safe enough."

"Yes, but they'd know that *she* hasn't got that kind of money in her own right. They'll realise she's got a joint account with Sir Mark. What if these jewellers want Sir Mark to endorse the purchase?"

Joe Purset fingered his chin reflectively. Then he said brightly: "Tell you what. We can let this chap from Beaucaire's actually *talk* to Sir Mark."

"But he's in New York!"

"I know, sweet. But I didn't work as a Post Office engineer for nothing. I can rig the phone downstairs so as it's connected with the phone in this bedroom."

"And?"

"Well, it's child's play, love. You pick up the phone in the drawingroom downstairs and I answer from upstairs. You say: 'I want a person-to-person call to Sir Mark Henty at the Bilton Hotel, New York.' I ask for your number and you give it. You replace the phone. Presently I ring you. This time I'm Sir Mark Henty."

Jenny bit her lip doubtfully. "I don't know, Joe. It sounds all right, of course . . ."

"I'll muffle the mouthpiece —speak faint. I know how to do it. It's only an emergency plan, anyway. We won't need to do it unless Ralston gets cagey."

He glanced at his watch. "What time's he coming?"

"Between three and four."

"Great. Gives me time to fix the blower." He swung off the bed, kissed the nape of her neck. "This time tomorrow, honey, we'll be miles away with a little bauble worth sixty thousand dollars . . ."

"It really is a lovely piece, Lady Henty," remarked Ralston. "The best in our special catalogue."

"And I simply *must* have it!" Jenny Weston held it around her throat, admiring its effect in the mirror above the drawing-room mantelpiece.

"Sir Mark's in New York, I believe?"

"Yes," came the pat answer. "I mentioned it to him on the phone. I call him regularly." She moved gracefully towards an escritoire. "Now, about the check, Mr. Ralston . . ."

Ralston said: "You have a joint account with Sir Mark, of course."

Jenny smiled. "Sir Mark fully agrees, as I told you."

"Quite, quite." He smiled back. "But if we might trouble Sir Mark to endorse. . ."

"But of course!" Her face was beautifully bland and open.

She picked up the phone, asked for international service then said: "I want a person-to-person call to Sir Mark Henty at the Bilton Hotel, New York."

She replaced the receiver and stood fingering the necklace admiringly while she continued chatting with Ralston.

The phone rang. "Oh, hello Mark! Yes dear, this is Elizabeth pestering you again.

"Look, dear, I've bought the necklace I told you about. The necklace, yes. I wouldn't have bothered you darling, only it's sixty thousand and Mr. Ralston from Beaucaire's would like your agreement.

"No, darling, not in writing. Just talk to him on the phone. He's here now. I'll hand over and you can put his mind at ease."

Ralston took the phone. "A mere formality, Sir Mark. Lady Henty insisted on ringing you. . . She is to make out the check?. . .very good, sir, and thank you."

He handed the phone back. Jenny chatted briefly with her "husband," then hung up, turned to Ralston and said: "I'll write the check."

Detective Inspector Craig said to the man from Beaucaire's: "They almost deserved to get away with it. For a couple of fairly inexperienced cons it wasn't bad."

"The girl wasn't *quite* how I imagined Lady Henty. But that wasn't what queered their pitch. It was the chime that did it."

"The CID man frowned. "Chime?"

"While I was talking to Sir Mark—or rather her boy-friend, Joe Purset—I heard a clock chime four at the other end of the line. I looked at my watch. Rather odd, I thought. . .

"New York is five hours behind British Standard Time. It should have been striking eleven in New York, shouldn't it?"

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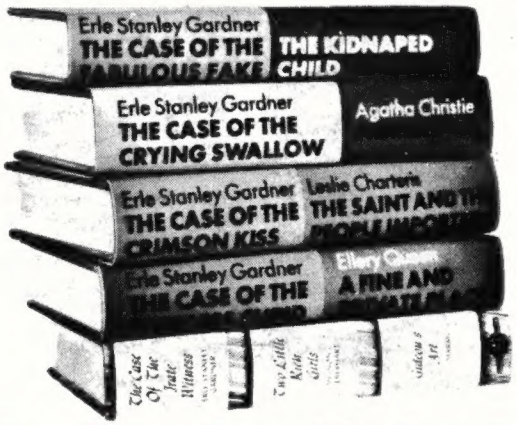

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